

Rabbi Moses Hayyim Ephraim of Sudlikov's **Degel Mahane Ephraim**

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ABSTRACT

Degel Mahane Ephraim is a collection of homilies interpreting passages from the weekly readings of the Torah and other biblical and rabbinic books. It was written between 1780 and 1800, by Moses Hayyim Ephraim of Sudlikov, the grandson of the Ba'al Shem Tov, who was Ephraim's teacher for the first twenty years of his life. The Ba'al Shem's teachings are a prominent feature in the book, which also includes an appendix of miscellaneous sayings which Ephraim heard from his grandfather, and a collection of Ephraim's dreams.

The body of the dissertation is a translation of the complete homilies on five Torah portions (Be-Reshit, Yitro, Zav, Balak, and Va-'Ethannan), of selected homilies from the rest of the book, and of the collections of the Ba'al Shem's words and Ephraim's dreams. This text is accompanied by notes indicating literary sources, and clarifying connections to contemporary Jewish religious practice and to ideas of earlier kabbalistic and rabbinic thought.

The Introduction presents the text as one particular artifact of the early Hasidic world. The text is found to address three social issues indirectly: economic hardship,

BE-RESHIT

In the beginning, God created . . .

(Genesis 1:1)

Understand the opening of our holy Torah with the word be-reshit. For look at what King David, may he rest in peace, said: "The Torah of the Lord is perfect, restoring life [Psalm 19:8]. It is necessary to understand how the fact that it is "perfect" belongs to its "restoring life."

This is how the matter stands: It is known that in the holy Zohar is written, "The Blessed Holy One, the Torah and the souls of Israel are all one."¹ It is important to understand this, for the life of Israel is -- as if it were possible -- from the essence of the Blessed Holy One. As it is written, "He blew into his nostrils the breath of life" [Genesis 2:7]; and it is also stated, "Can anyone breathe except out of his own essence?"² This is Torah: it is a human being. Therefore it contains 248 positive commands and 365 prohibitions corresponding to the number of a person's limbs and sinews, as it is written, "This is the Torah, a person, etc." [Numbers 19:14].³ This suggests that the Torah is actually the essence of a person; thus "the Blessed Holy One, the Torah and Israel are all one."

Consequently, when one must restore a Jew, either spiritually or physically, it is impossible except by means of the Blessed Holy One and the Torah, from which we live. The fact that we see a sick person sometimes healed by means of medicines or [divine] names, an amulet or charms, means that these are actually the Torah, for everything is included in Torah -- divinity, medicines, remedies, names -- it lacks nothing.⁴

If faith in God were always fixed in the hearts of every person, and "God were his trust" [Jeremiah 17:7], he would certainly not need medicines or anything save the grace of God, arousing the love of God, may He be blessed, to restore him either by means of prayer or by means of studying the holy Torah.⁵ As it is written, "[My words are life to those who find them] and healing to all his flesh" [Proverbs 4:22]. However, because of a lack of faith, God forbid, people need medicines or other things. But this is what King David, peace be upon him, said: "The Torah of the Lord is perfect": it is completely whole, without anything lacking, utterly complete. This is in it, everything is in it, as mentioned above. Therefore, it restores life to each one in accordance with his belief; however, it is all by means of the Torah.⁶

And this is also to be understood in the opening of the Torah, which hints at this in the word be-reshit (b-r-'-sh-y-t), which is an abbreviation: ba-torah, "in the Torah,"

yesh, "there are": 'alef, standing for 'elohut, "divinity"; resh, for refu'ot, "medicines"; shin, for shemot, "names"-- and this is shin pointed on the right. Sin pointed on the left refers to segulot, "charms"; and taf indicates temimah, "perfection", which is to say, because it is perfect it lacks nothing but rather is called "completion", containing everything that gives life spiritually and materially. Understand this.

One can also say: **In the beginning God created**, explaining that 'elohim (God) in gematria equals ha-teva', "nature";⁷ and that reshit (beginning) is wisdom, as the Targum Yerushalmi renders be-reshit, "by means of wisdom." Thus the passage suggests, "be-reshit," that is, by wisdom, He created 'elohim: God, may He be blessed, created nature in the world;⁸ and this is wondrous wisdom, for nature is the four elements, fire, air, water, and earth. The whole basis of bodily health depends on the elements being in equal mixture. When one element overpowers another, God forbid, from this some weakness or ailment of the body, God forbid, is drawn to the person, as is known to those learned in natural science. For all remedies only strengthen nature so

that no one element may be weaker than another, but rather that all may be in equal balance.

But the Torah is infinity, and what is in the world is in humanity according to the principle of 'Olam -- Shanah -- Nefesh, world -- year -- human soul.⁹ Accordingly, a person who is intelligent and has wisdom can certainly create for himself a new nature, and change the nature he formerly had. For example, a naturally wrathful or covetous person, if intelligent, can transform his nature, and conquer his anger, and his words will be peaceful.¹⁰ Similarly, he will not covet and pursue luxury, but will be satisfied with what he has. But everything depends on wisdom, as it is written "A person's intelligence slows his anger," and again "anger lodges in the bosom of fools" [Proverbs 19:11, Kohelet 7:9]. the form must resemble its maker: just as the Maker-of-All created nature in the world by means of wisdom, so the individual can create a new nature for himself by means of wisdom.

From this we learn how it is possible to restore someone, in the physical realm, by means of Torah. For a breakdown or weakness of the body comes because of a weakening of one of the four elements which are called nature, as already mentioned. But when the elements are re-aligned so that all are in equal balance, one is thereby restored to his original state. And, as we have already said, be-reshit, that is, with wisdom, He created 'elohim. In other words,¹¹

nature was created with wisdom; but wisdom is Torah, as it is written, "In wisdom you made them all" [Psalm 104:34].¹² Accordingly, the realigning and strengthening of nature is also by means of the Torah, for Torah also contains cures, as mentioned above. Understand this.

But since God, in his compassion and great love, has graced me with knowledge, it is necessary to make more intelligible how God, may He be blessed, created nature through wisdom.

It is known that a concealed thing, something which has not yet come into the realm of action, is called "potency" (koah), because it is still potential. But that which is revealed is called "actualization" (po'al), as in "from potential to actual", that is, from the hidden to the revealed.¹³ And it is known that hokhmah, wisdom, is made up of the letters k-h (koah), m-h. But the letters mem(m)-he(h), with their hidden portion spelled out in full -- m-m and h-a -- are equivalent by gematria to the word 'elohim.¹⁴ Thus 'elohim, that is, nature, was created by means of wisdom. Therefore the zaddikim who cleave to the Torah and to wisdom can change all natures, both physical and spiritual, to good and to blessing. Understand this.

Another interpretation of **In the beginning God created:** that is, with wisdom, God, may He be blessed, created 'elohim -- awe, as in the saying of our Sages of blessed memory [Pirkei Avot 3:21], "where there is no wisdom, there is no awe [and where there is no awe there is no wisdom]."15

It must be said that from this [principle] they learned to make revisions [in translating certain biblical passages for the Septuagint] for King Ptolemy, and to write "'Elohim created be-reshit" [Megillah 9a]. For "where there is no awe there is no wisdom," and so the opposite [of the biblical order] must also be true: 'elohim, that is, with awe, God created be-reshit, wisdom.16

It should also be noted that there is fear and there is fear: awe of the majesty of the Infinite One, may He be blessed, because He is the essence and root of all worlds, and fear of punishment, as is explained at greater length in the holy Zohar [1:11b-12a], where it can be studied.

Thus it can be said that the Torah is alluding to the individual. Be-reshit, that is, by means of wisdom, bara 'elohim. Bara suggests behirut, "clarity", and the light of purity, as "pure (barah), enlightening the eyes" [Psalm 19:8], for the letters 'alef, het, he, and 'ayin interchange.17 In other words, by means of wisdom, a person

can clarify and purify 'elohim, that is, fear, so that it be solely inward awe, with no admixture of an ulterior motive from outward fear, but pure fear of God [Psalm 19:10]. Understand!

One can also interpret [the verse as follows]: Be-reshit, that is, with wisdom, bara -- these are the letters of 'ever, a limb -- in other words, limbs are made which unite 'elohim: even all the natural words and stories, according to [the maxim in Sukkah 21b]: "Even the casual words of the wise [demand study]," as will be explained in what follows, if God wills.¹⁸ Understand this.

One can also explain, Bereshit bara 'elohim: The final letters of these words spell 'emet, "truth," as is mentioned by the author of the Turim.¹⁹ And Targum Yerushalmi renders be-reshit: "with wisdom." This is a hint that except for one who has wisdom it is impossible to approach the attribute of truth. It is utterly impossible that one who is a fool could ever reach truth. And the

opposite is also true: one who attaches himself to truth and distances himself with all his strength from falsehood, will be able to come to wisdom. However, one who remains sunk in falsehood cannot possibly reach true wisdom. Understand this.

Another interpretation of **In the beginning God created**, proceeds along the lines of what I have said²⁰ concerning the verse, "Moses went up to 'elohim" [Exodus 19:10]: namely, that all of the ascents of Moses occurred only so that he might be the aspect 'elohim. That is, by means of the purification of his material substance he was made completely form, which is the essence of the light of 'elohim.²¹

In this vein, also note that the verse "And this is the blessing with which Moses the man of God ('ish ha-'elohim) blessed [Israel]" [Deuteronomy 33:1] suggests that it is with this blessing that Moses blessed Israel: that they would be able to transform 'ish, humanity -- which indicates matter created out of nothing into being -- into the quality of 'elohim, which is the form and light of God. In other words, they would equal [Moses'] high plane,

purifying their material nature so that it totally become light, the quality of 'elohim.

This is what the Torah suggests here at its opening, to advise as to how to arrive at that which is the essential aim. Thus, be-reshit -- according to the Targum Yerushalmi, "with wisdom" -- by means of wisdom, bara 'elohim: every person can create for himself [the possibility] of being a new creation, the opposite of the day he was born; rather, becoming unified, and making form out of his material being, so that there be no materiality at all in him, but only divinity. Understand this.

**And God saw that the light was good, [and God
separated the light from the darkness].**
(Genesis 1:4)

The Midrash states: [He saw] that it was good to hide it away, and he hid it . . . for the zaddikim and the zaddikim in every generation use it. See that passage [Hagigah 12a].²²

But I heard from my master, my grandfather, whose soul is in Eden, his memory a blessing for the life of the world to come, where this light was hidden. He said that God, may He be blessed, hid it away in the Torah. And thus

the zaddikim of every generation use this light, that is, by means of the Torah, which contains that identical light with which one can see from one end of the world to the other--as in the case of several such events which I saw with my own eyes. [For example,] when he [the Ba'al Shem] wrote to my late great-uncle R. Gershon Kitover, may his memory be a blessing, who had travelled to the Holy Land, [asking] how it was that he had seen him on the Sabbath outside the land, and what he had been doing outside the land; and my great-uncle answered him in a letter [saying] that on that Sabbath a wealthy man had arranged a circumcision [for his son] outside the land, and had sent for him to be the circumciser. So many more [examples could be told] that this sheet of paper could not contain them, in which he truly looked from one end of the world to the other. And it all was by means of that light hidden in the Torah.²³

And one must say that this is hinted in this verse, for the author of the Turim interpreted the light, 'et ha-'or, by gematria, as ba-torah, "in the Torah."²⁴ So it is actually clarified in the verse: **And God saw that the light** ('et ha-'or) **was good** to hide away. Where did he hide it? Within 'et ha-'or itself, namely, in the Torah, ba-Torah, which is equal in number to 'et ha-'or. Understand this.

**On the seventh day God finished his work
which he had made. . . .**

(Genesis 2:2)

One should interpret this as an allusion in accordance with the saying of the Sages, may their memory be a blessing [Berakhot 6b]: "the entire world was created only for such a one . . . the entire world was created only to attend to such a one." Look there.²⁵ From this arises the idea that, essentially, the making of the world and of all Israel was solely for the sake of a single zaddik who constantly serves God in truth and perfection and with complete love. When this zaddik arouses his desire, longing to be attached to the living God, then, automatically, all Israel is drawn after him, for they all are called **his work**, having been formed and created for him.

This is what the verse says. **Finished, va-yekhal**, is an expression of ardent desire, as in the verse, "My soul yearns (kaltah) [for the courts of YHVH]" [Psalm 84:3]. In other words, when the zaddik, who is the seventh day, the Sabbath,²⁶ arouses longing and attaches himself to the light of the face of the King of life,²⁷ then he activates the operation of desire in all created beings, all of whom are **his work which he has made**, as we have explained; for all of them were created only for his sake. Understand this.

One should add that [this verse] also makes a hint along the lines of a passage in the holy Zohar [2:135b]: "When the Sabbath enters . . . all the forces of judgment are removed from her." This is the sense of the verse: va-yekhal: yikalah, "it will come to an end" -- 'elohim, namely, the forces of judgment -- on the seventh day. When the Sabbath enters, all forces of judgment cease and are abolished and compassion prevails.²⁸ Understand.

God said, "Let the earth put forth grass (deshe), plants yielding seed [and fruit trees bearing fruit after their kind]". . . . And the earth brought forth [grass,] plants yielding seed according to their kind. . . .
(Genesis 1:11-12)

The Sages explained [in Hullin 60a], that in the case of grasses the command "after its kind" was not given, but "they themselves argued kal va-homer²⁹ ['if the command "after its kind" was given to trees, which do not naturally grow in a confused fashion, how much more so does it apply to us!']". Look there. This accords with the plain sense of the verse: the Sages had difficulty understanding why God, may He be blessed, did not command the grasses [to grow] "after their kind"; and the answer is that God knew that the

grasses, on their own, would apply kal va-homer to themselves.

However, there is also a secret here, since God has granted knowledge to humanity with which to innovate in his holy Torah, "each according to his task" [Numbers 4:19], his Torah, and the light of his soul, bestowed by God in his compassion and great love.

In the midrashim on the verse "[Joseph] went in to do his work" [Genesis 39:11], the following appears: "he entered to fulfill his needs," but there "his father's image was revealed to him" [Sotah 36b]. In this way his mind was calmed [and he was able] to overcome his yezer ([evil] inclination).³⁰ This is hinted in the words [that follow in the verse]: "there was no one . . . there" -- however, his father's image was there. Thus there is a remedy and advice [as to how] to be saved from evil thoughts or lecherous desire, God forbid: to imagine the image of one's father. This will engender the power of holiness, and in this way one will be saved from the evil yezer and from all evil desires.

I heard about this, or saw it written in some book, and it is possible to make this more intelligible that it might be of use in being saved from the evil yezer: I heard from my master, my grandfather, whose soul is in Eden, Rabbi Israel Ba'al Shem, that it is written in Sefer Berit Menuḥah that wisdom is called kivrot ha-ta'avah.³¹ For when a person is attached to wisdom all lustful desires (ta'avot)

automatically leave him. Therefore it is called kivrot ha-ta'avah ("the graveyard of carnal desire"): by means of wisdom one buries and destroys the power of desire over him.

Along these lines I gave an interpretation of the verse "your camp shall be holy, that he not see anything indecent among you [and turn away from you]" [Deuteronomy 23:15]. Holiness is called wisdom, as is known, and this is a person's intellect.³² When one attaches his thought and his intellect to the wisdom of the Torah and divinity, and conducts all his limbs by this intelligence, all his limbs become spirit, solely wisdom and intellect, as they are attached to the intellect. This is how the zaddikim, God's holy ones, transform their material nature into form, which is wisdom and intellect, and become fully wisdom. Thus the verse states, "Your camp shall be holy." In other words, let all the parts of your body be holy, that is, in wisdom: see that they all cleave to, and behave in accord with, the intellect and wisdom, called "holy." Then there will not be "anything indecent among you": that is, every indecent thing and evil thoughts, God forbid, will automatically leave you, as mentioned above.

This is the reason that imagining the image of one's father is helpful in cancelling the evil yezer: because abba, father, is wisdom, as is known.³³ It is also known that where a person's thought is, there all of him is found. When one ponders wisdom, in that moment, all of him is

attached to wisdom. And whatever a person arouses in his thought, the same is aroused for him from above.³⁴ Thus when one arouses the image of his father by the attachment of his thought, he thereby arouses upon himself from above his [father's] aspect, which is the graveyard of desire; and thus he stops and turns evil desires, God forbid, away from himself.

This helps us understand very succinctly the passage in the Tikkunim: "With wisdom God founded the earth" [Proverbs 3:19]: with the father he established the daughter.³⁵ Look there; it is as described above. And thus the passage, **Let the earth put forth grass:** deshe is an abbreviation of deyokno shel 'aviv, the image of his father. Then of itself each will be according to its kind, with no intermingling of another kind.³⁶ Understand this well.

Make all herbage sprout [and save]

(from the fourth of the Hosha'not for Sukkot)

One must explain the hint here according to what is known: that the main thing is to raise up every word that comes from one's mouth to thought and wisdom, which is 'abba, "father." And this is hinted here: **all herbage** (siaḥ) is an expression meaning "word" -- even casual words and stories

you will make sprout -- tadshe, an abbreviation [meaning] you will raise up the image of "father."³⁷ Understand.

The name of the first is Pishon; [it is the [river] which flows around the whole land of Havilah] where there is gold; and the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there.

(Genesis 2:11)

The Sages, may their memory be a blessing, have enlightened me that this is to be interpreted [as follows]: **Pishon** is pi shoneh, "a mouth repeating halakhot."³⁸ And their saying is known: "'Long life is in her right hand [in her left hand are riches and honor]' . . . to those who go to her right hand [there is length of days . . .]" -- to those who study for its own sake (li-shemah) [Shabbat 63a on Proverbs 3:16].³⁹ One should say that the verse hints this here. **Pishon:** pi shoneh, meaning, when one studies halakhot for the sake of the union of the Blessed Holy One and his Shekhinah, which union [by gematria] equals pi with one included,⁴⁰ **where there is gold:** from this one has riches and honor. **And the gold of that land is good:** that is, they are not among those who go to the left.⁴¹ The text further explains, **bdellium is there:** it is known that bdellium has two colors in it, white and red, and this is a hint that this

is impossible unless one studies the Torah and the halakhah in awe and love, the aspects of hesed and gevurah, white and red.⁴² And onyx stone, shoham, spells Mosheh: in other words, one should study the Torah for its own sake, lishemah, the letters of le-Mosheh, for Moses -- to connect oneself to Knowledge, which is the aspect of Moses.⁴³ Then the gold of that land is good. Understand this.

This is the book (sefer) of the generations of Adam.

(Genesis 5:1)

Sefer in gematria [equals] shem, "name,"⁴⁴ and "name" is the soul, as Rabbi Nahman [of Horodenka], may his memory be a blessing, said: "[Each] living creature is its name" [Genesis 2:19]: a person's name is the vital spirit of that person, which is the soul.⁴⁵ This is what [the Torah] implies here: **This is the book** -- that is, the soul -- **of the generations of Adam** -- [the soul] is in accord with the individual's good deeds, which are called **generations**. As one strives in one's actions, so does he merit light of soul. Understand this.

Or it could be meant along the lines of [Pirkei Avot 6:1], "He who studies the Torah for its own sake merits many things (zokeh li-devarim harbeh).\" One should make the interpretation that in one's [study of] Torah for its own sake, he purifies many words (mezakkekh dibburim harbeh), both his own -- those utterances he had spoiled, which were without kavvanah and which fell into the foulness of materiality -- and the utterances of others. By means of studying the Torah for its own sake, he raises and refines, purifies and divides everything from being alloyed; the sediments and shells fall below, and only what is pure remains.⁴⁶

One should note that this is hinted in the verse. **This is the sefer** suggests the Torah, which is called sefer [following the] expression "their polishing was like sapphire (sappir gizratam)" [Lamentations 4:7]: both give light, [the Torah] because it enlightens the eyes of those who exert themselves in it.⁴⁷ (**The generations of Adam:** the word sefer is drawn below as well; that is, one makes shine and illumines by means of the sefer, the Torah.)⁴⁸ **The generations of Adam:** all the deeds of human kind are called "generations." In regard to zaddikim, their "generations" are essentially good deeds; but among evil doers, the reverse [is the case]. By means of the Torah, he [the zaddik] illumines and polishes the words of a person who had spoiled them -- that is, [by study for its own sake, for then, by the

light of Torah, called wisdom, he clarifies the good and rejects the refuse.

Similarly, one should interpret sefer from the expression sippurei devarim, tales. Even when one engages in common conversation, if it is "ordinary fare prepared according to the [standards applied to] what is holy" [Hullin 2b], in other words, during his conversation he is attached to wisdom, called "holy," then he makes shine like a sapphire, and polishes **the generations of Adam**. What has been blemished through common conversation -- everything he repairs and elevates, both when he speaks words in wisdom and elevates by means of words, as is known in the name of my master, my grandfather, his soul in Eden; and when he makes himself a chariot to wisdom, his thought constantly joined to it, as [in Deuteronomy 10:20] "you shall cleave to Him." Then the Blessed Holy One sends him utterances which are needed for the tikkun of the person and the tikkun of the world, to raise them up and sweeten them.⁴⁹

This is what is hinted in the verse, "She opens her mouth in wisdom, and the Torah of hesed is on her tongue" [Proverbs 31:26]: that is, when the beginning and the opening of one's mouth is in wisdom, then "the Torah of hesed is on her tongue (leshonah)." Even one's common conversation -- which is called lashon after the manner of [Berakhot 31a]: "The Torah speaks in human language (leshon)" -- becomes "the Torah of hesed." God, may He be blessed, prepares one

utterances through which to perform hesed with the Shekhinah, who is called dalet. And this is the sense of hesed: has-dalet, having compassion for dalet, as is known.⁵⁰ Understand this.

Alternatively, one could say **This is the book of the generations of Adam** following [2 Samuel 8:13], "David made a name." Look in the Zohar [3:113a] at the interpretation of how he made a name.⁵¹ And it is known that all [the years] David lived were the years of Adam, which he gave him as a gift [Yalkut Shimoni 1:41].⁵² One must say that this is what is hinted in the verse: **This is the sefer** [refers to] the name which David made, for "name" in gematria [equals] sefer. **The generations of Adam** [identifies] by means of whom he [David] was born, i.e., Adam: he was to have been an aborted foetus, but his actual birth was made possible by Adam. This is easy to understand.

Or, let it be rendered [as follows]: **This is the book of the generations of Adam**. As mentioned above, sefer by gematria [equals] shem, name, which is the Shekhinah as is known.⁵³ It is also known that our essential goal is to lift the Shekhinah out of the dust and raise her up.⁵⁴ Whomever puts this into effect, whose deeds are done with this purpose

of enlightening and raising up the Shekhinah, the Shekhinah lifts up in turn; he rises higher and higher. But whomever through his deeds causes, God forbid, the humiliation of the Shekhinah -- as if it were possible! -- the Shekhinah brings low in turn, to the bottom of Sheol.

This is what is hinted in the verse: **This is the book** -- that is, the Shekhinah, as it were, is in accordance with **the generations of Adam** [i.e., the human being] and his deeds. And vice versa: **the generations of Adam** and the events that befall him are in accord with the Shekhinah, called shem, by gematria sefer.⁵⁵ Understand.

Or one might render [this verse] following that which is stated [in Bereshit Rabba 12:10 on Genesis 5:2], "[in the day of] their creation (hibbar'am)': with he He created them." And one should give the following explanation: with the five books of the Torah God created the world.⁵⁶ It is also known that the creation of the world was essentially for the human being (ha-adam).⁵⁷ And it is this which one should see hinted in the verse. **This is the book** -- that is, the five books of the Torah -- **of the generations of Adam**: as already mentioned, with he, five, He created the world; and the primary object is the human being. This is easy to understand.

Or, one could give [an interpretation] along the lines of "Avram did not beget, but Abraham did beget" [Bereshit Rabba 44:10].⁵⁸ And one should explain: when He added the five books of the Torah to him, he became like a new creature and begot sons. This is what is hinted in the verse. **This is the book** -- in other words, the five books of the Torah -- **of the generations of Adam**: by means of the Torah it is possible for a man to have children, and to change fate, as happened with Abraham. Understand this.

This is the book of the generations of Adam.

Let us begin with what I said about the verse "Moses diligently inquired (darosh darash) about the goat of the purification offering" [Numbers 10:16]. Regarding darosh darash the Masorah notes, here is half the [number of] letters contained in the Torah.⁵⁹ We need to understand what is hinted in the fact that the calculation of half the letters contained in the Torah [falls] here.

It is important to say that it is known [that] the written Torah and oral Torah together are one; one is not at all divided from its fellow, for each is impossible without the other. The secrets of the written Torah are revealed by the oral Torah; and the written Torah without the oral Torah

is not a complete Torah.⁶⁰ It was like only half a book until the Sages, may their memory be a blessing, came and interpreted the Torah, revealing hidden things and occasionally removing something from it, for example, regarding lashings, of which it is written in the Torah [to give] 40, but the Rabbis came and reduced it by one [Makkot 22b].⁶¹ All this [came about] through the holy spirit, which came upon them [so that] they had the power to do this. It turns out that the completeness of the written Torah depends on the oral Torah. Thus one who says that a [certain] kal va-ḥomer is not from the Torah or who opposes one saying of the Sages, is as if he denies the Torah of our master Moses, peace be upon him;⁶² for all depends on the Sages' interpretations, which are the basis of the completion of the written Torah. This is the explanation for the appearance of the hint, darosh darash, [marking] half the letters contained in the Torah: until the Sages interpreted it, the Torah was not called whole, but half. In the expositions of the Sages the Torah was completed, coming to be called a whole book.

And so it is in every generation: its interpreters complete the Torah, for the Torah is expounded in each and every generation according to what that generation needs, and in accord with the root of the souls of that generation.⁶³ So God, may He be blessed, enlightens the wise of that generation in his holy Torah; and anyone who denies this is also as one who denies the Torah, God forbid. Similarly, I

saw in the holy book that the Ineffable Name has been used by every generation, each according to the generation and the root of its soul,⁶⁴ and so also the Torah in its entirety, which consists of the names of the Blessed Holy One.

It is also known that King David, peace upon him, is the secret of oral Torah. And it is stated that David was to have been an aborted foetus, but Adam gave him seventy of his own years, and King David was born [Yalkut Shimoni 1: remez 41]. So should one interpret the verse: **This is the book**, that is, the written Torah is made a complete book, **of the generations of Adam**, in other words, by means of King David who is the secret of oral Torah and who [exists out of] the generations of Adam, as already mentioned. Through him the Torah becomes a complete whole, because the written Torah alone is nothing but half a book: the oral Torah completes it, so that it is called a whole book. Understand this.

Since God in his compassion and great love has granted knowledge, one should give an interpretation in accord with that mentioned above on the verse "David made a name" [2 Samuel 8:13]. Look at how the holy Zohar [3:113a] interpreted this "name" -- what it is --, and it will be understood according to that mentioned above, [namely] that "name," shem, in gematria is sefer, book.⁶⁵ And this is the meaning of the verse, "David made a name": King David, peace

be upon him, the secret of the oral Torah, made the written Torah into a sefer, as mentioned above. Understand that although I have spoken on the verse "David made a name for himself" in another fashion, yet "these and those are 'the words of the living God'" [Eruvin 13b citing Jeremiah 23:36].⁶⁶

There is a further interpretation one should make regarding this, as God has granted, etc.⁶⁷: Moses brought the Torah down to Israel from heaven, and when David made a name, shem, the letters sh-m, with he, the five books of the Torah, spelled Moshe in actuality. The allusion in this is that the written Torah, given by Moses, was in potentiality all the oral Torah and what a distinguished scholar would someday innovate.⁶⁸ Therefore, it was Moshe who brought the Torah from heaven to earth, that is, the letters sh-m and h: shem, the oral Torah which David made, included in the h (five) books of the Torah. Understand this.

May God (ha-Shem) enlighten my eyes in his Torah, the Torah of truth for me and my descendants, now and forever. Amen.

The following could also be said:

This is the book of the generations of Adam in the day that God created earth and heaven. One should explain [this] according to the statement in the Tikkunim [tikkun 69, p. 104a] on the verse, "I have put my words in your mouth . . . planting the heavens and laying the foundations of the earth, and saying to Zion 'You are my people'" [Isaiah 51:16]: when one makes new the Torah's words, he creates a new heaven and a new earth. This is the meaning of "I have put my words in your mouth": as I made heaven and earth through speech, so also [can] you, with your mouth. "Planting the heavens and laying the foundations of the earth, and saying to Zion, 'You are my people ('ammi)'" : don't read 'ammi but 'immi, "with me," in partnership, as mentioned. Look there.⁶⁹

Thus should we explain what the verse intimates: **This is the book**, in other words, this is the Torah, **in the day that God created**: that is, with it [the Torah] God, may He be blessed, created his world, heaven and earth and all that is upon it. **The generations of Adam**: the individual is also able, by means of the fact that he engenders innovations in Torah, to create a new heaven and earth, for He made the human being in the image of God.⁷⁰ Understand this.

In this way one should explain the verse "Thus said God, who created the heavens, stretching them out, [who spreads out the earth and what it brings forth,] who gives breath (neshamah) to the people upon it" [Isaiah 42:5]: God, may He be blessed, creates heaven and earth at every moment -- through the souls (neshamot) of the zaddikim, who, by means of their innovation of Torah, create a new heaven and earth, as mentioned above. This is the meaning of "who creates the heavens, stretching them out": the souls of the zaddikim, who stretch out heaven and earth. And this is the sense of "giving breath" (neshamah) to the people upon it."⁷¹

Another interpretation: **This is the book of the generations of Adam.**

The holy Zohar reconciles two passages in the Gemara that contradict one another. One passage reads, "Children, length of life and sustenance depend not on merit but on planetary influence (mazzal)" [Mo'ed Katan 28a]; and one states, "Israel is immune from planetary influence" [Shabbat 156a]. But [the zohar] explains that "children, length of life and sustenance" [applies to] the world in general. For Israel also, before the Torah was given to them, all depended

on planetary influence; but once the Torah had been given to Israel, then Israel was immune from planetary influence. One can study [the Zohar's] words there:⁷² by means of [the Torah] Israel left the power of the stars and the planetary influences.

It is important to explain that the Torah is wisdom, "but where (me-'ayin) shall wisdom be found" [Job 28:12]? It comes, in other words, from a place called 'ayin, "nothing."⁷³ Thus we find that one who attaches himself to the Torah, suckles from the place called "Nothing"; and thence come all that which is drawn and flows forth to Israel.⁷⁴ There all things are changed from their natural course: thence are performed all the miracles, such as the parting of the Sea of Reeds, and also humanity's sustenance. When one cleaves to wisdom, called Nothing, his planetary influence changes to good and to blessing; similarly [his] length of life, for "wisdom preserves the life of those who possess it" [Kohelet 7:12], and also children, for these three are in one scale. In each of them there is begetting by means of an intelligence,⁷⁵ as [is the case with] children. Similarly, length of life is [acquired] by means of intelligence, as already mentioned, for "wisdom preserves the life of those who possess it." Sustenance is also produced by intelligence, for by considering which trade one will pursue and what one will do to make a living, one engenders fruit and profits. Everything can be changed by

means of the Torah, which comes from the place called Nothing. And thus "Israel is immune from planetary influence."

In this fashion one should also explain the meaning of the Sages [dictum] "Abram did not beget, but Abraham did beget" [Bereshit Rabba 44:10]. This implies that when [the letter] he -- the five books of the Torah in potentiality-- was added to him [i.e., his name], he left [the dominion] of his planetary influence and [rose] above the course of nature, as previously noted. In this manner, also, should we explain the verse: **This is the book**, the Torah, which is **the generations of Adam**. In other words, by its [the Torah's] means human begettings -- children, length of life, and sustenance -- are drawn forth. Even though these depend on planetary influence, yet by means of the Torah to which Israel is attached, their begettings change and all of these will be theirs. Although from the perspective of planetary influence it is not determined that they will be theirs, this is changed by their attachment to the Torah, called Nothing, as mentioned above.⁷⁶ Understand this.

Or one could say **This is the book of the generations of Adam**, in that it is apparent that all the worlds were

created by means of the Torah. Therefore all the worlds are in the secret of an upright person, for the Torah is actually the human being since it contains 248 commandments and 365 prohibitions corresponding to the number of a person's limbs and sinews.⁷⁷ Thus all the worlds were [left] hanging and loose until the human being was created, the conclusion of the work, "first in thought but last in deed" [Zohar 3:238a (Ra'aya Meheimna)].⁷⁸ It happens that when an individual performs a positive mizvah or keeps himself from doing what is prohibited, he illumines and gives radiance to all the worlds and establishes them, for the Torah is the vitality of all the worlds and is enacted by the individual.⁷⁹

This [explains how] the Sages, may their memory be a blessing, expounded the verse "The earth feared and was tranquil" [Psalm 76:9 in Shabbat 88a]: "At first it feared," but afterwards, when Israel accepted the Torah, "it was tranquil," for all the [world's] vitality and continued existence is based on the performance of the mizvot of the Torah. Similarly, in thought, when one protects himself from pride of heart he puts into effect [the mizvah] "You shall have no [other Gods before Me]" [Exodus 20:3], and along with it all the Torah's prohibitions which follow from it. So also when one thinks of doing a mizvah, or guards himself from a certain meditation of the heart because he believes that there is a God in the world, he thus puts into effect "I am YHVH your God," and along with it all the Torah's positive

commands which follow from it.⁸⁰ I have already written several times that the Torah is called a book, sefer, from the expression sappir, "sapphire," because it illumines and enlightens the one who exerts himself in it. And this is how one should explain the verse: **This is the book**, in other words, the holy Torah, called a book as previously mentioned -- and also the principle by means of which it is the vitality and luminosity of all the worlds -- **of the generations of Adam**: that is, [the Torah] is enacted by the "generations" of an individual, his actions and his thoughts, as mentioned above. In this way, one illumines and gives radiance and vitality to all the worlds. Understand this.

Or one could speak [about this verse] as I spoke about the verse "What great nation is there that has statutes and ordinances as righteous (zaddikim) as all this Torah" [Deuteronomy 4:8], in accord with what is written "Light is sown for the righteous." [Psalm 97:11]. It is important to express what is intended in this: the Blessed Holy One, as if it were possible, takes light from His essence, may His name be blessed, and sows that light in the world, and a zaddik in the world is grown from it -- like Abraham, who was grown from the light of morning, white light, and Isaac, from red light. So also Jacob, Moses and Aaron, and all the

zaddikim, and the wise and discerning in each and every generation; all are born from a particular light which is related to a certain mizvah from among the mizvot of the Torah.⁸¹ Therefore, there is a zaddik who very much illumines the mizvah of charity, and there is a zaddik who gives light to the world through Torah, and there is a zaddik who greatly illumines the mizvah of hospitality -- so it is with them all, each according to the root of that light from which he was born. Thus all of the Torah was revealed by our master Moses, peace be upon him, who was specifically the light of the entire Torah; but [the] particular light from which he derives is revealed by each of the other zaddikim.

This is what is said in the Gemara [Shabbat 118b]: "With what was your father the most careful? . . . With zizit."⁸² In this way one should explain the verse "that has statutes and ordinances as righteous (zaddikim)" [Deuteronomy 4:8]: the statutes and ordinances are themselves zaddikim, as mentioned, who are born from a certain light of a mizvah sown in the world; and the zaddikim are themselves statutes and ordinances. It is this that is also hinted here in the verse. **This is the book:** that is, the Torah itself is **the generations**. In other words, from the light of the mizvot which are emanated from His essence, may His name be blessed, a zaddik, called **Adam** is born. Understand!

But Noah found favor in God's sight.

(Genesis 6:8)

We should explain this in accord with the statement: "There are four colors in the eye . . . from white all compassion and good goes forth into the world . . . from red and black go forth all powers and forces of judgment," may the Merciful One protect us [Zohar 3:293b].⁸³ Now, at the time of the generation of the flood the providence of God, may He be blessed, certainly manifested itself in the colors red and black, to destroy that generation. But Noah, who was a zaddik, found a providence of kindness and compassion for himself. Even though at that time there were providential forces from other colors, he found the color white which had been hidden and concealed. It is this which is alluded to in the verse. **But Noah** -- meaning, since he had mended the root of his soul, which was his name, Noah⁸⁴ -- **found favor (hen) in God's sight:** the color white, which is favor and kindness, which had been hidden at that time. He found there the color of hesed and compassion for himself. And thus, the [letters of the word] hen, favor, are an abbreviation of "white light" (nehora hava), to hint that he found the color white in the eyes of the Blessed Holy One. Understand this.

YITRO

Jethro priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard [all that God had done for Moses and for Israel].

(Exodus 18:1)

One should explain this as an allusion -- an explanation which God bestowed upon me in His compassion and great love -- following the Sages' saying [Mishnah Avot 6:1] that "one who studies the Torah for its own sake merits many things. . . . To him are revealed the Torah's secrets; and he becomes like an ever-flowing spring, a river that does not cease."¹ The idea that "to him are revealed the Torah's secrets" is also mentioned in the Zohar [2:99 a-b] -- look there -- in the sense of a woman revealing secrets of her heart only to her husband. For to one who studies Torah for its own sake, the Torah becomes as a wife, and he becomes her husband.² This accords with [the midrash on Numbers 7:1] "On the day that Moses finished (kallot) [setting up the Tabernacle]": "What is written is kallat, 'bride of' [: on the day the Tabernacle was erected, Israel was as a bride entering the nuptial canopy]."³ So it is in every generation: the heads and eyes of the generation are like

Moses, as is mentioned in the Gemara [Shabbat 101b], "Moses! Have you spoken well?": One called his companion "Moses", which is knowledge (da'at), and one who has da'at is called "Moses".⁴

Understand the idea that "he becomes like an ever-flowing spring" in accordance with [Proverbs 31:26] "and the teaching of faithfulness (hesed) is on her tongue": the Torah is entirely hesed, and one who attaches himself to the Torah and studies Torah for its own sake "becomes like an ever-flowing spring." As a spring from which living water always flows, so he continually draws the forces of hesed, the aspect of water, upon himself and upon all in the world, each in accord with his degree. And even though the forces of hesed are not apparent or revealed to the eye, they are certainly full manifestations of it, and will finally be revealed. The phrase [in Pirkei 'Avot], "like a river that does not cease" means that in every single moment without any interruption, he constantly draws forth the powers of hesed like water for himself and for all who are in the world.⁵ Through this he sweetens all the forces of judgment (din),⁶ which, being sweetened, become complete manifestations of hesed.

It is known that in the writings of the Ari, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, it is written that Torah for its own sake (li-shemah) is [Torah] for the sake of he [le-shem he].⁷ Look there. Moreover, my

master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, said that "for its own sake" means for the sake of the word and the letter itself.⁸ Obviously, their ideas are one. And this is what is hinted in the verse **Jethro heard**. **Jethro** is numerically equivalent to ha-Torah,⁹ that is, to he Torah, Torah for its own sake, which is Torah for the sake of he as already mentioned. And **[he] heard** (va-yishma¹) expresses gathering together and joining, as [in 1 Samuel 15:4] "Saul mustered (va-yishamma¹) the people." In other words, when one gathers and binds himself in the study of Torah for its own sake -- which numerically equals **Jethro**, as mentioned above -- then [he becomes] **priest of Midian**. **Priest** is from the side of hesed;¹⁰ **Midian** is "from din (mi-din).". In other words, out of din he makes hesed -- the degree of a **priest**: by means of the forces of hesed which he continually draws forth, he sweetens all manifestations of din, as noted. **Moses' father-in-law** (hoten Moshe): no vowels are written in the Torah, and so one could say "the bridegroom, Moses" (hatan Moshe).¹¹ That is, he also reaches the rank of Moses, who was called the bridegroom of the Torah. As it is written [Numbers 7:1], "On the day that Moses finished" (kallat Moshe): the Torah was as a bride to him, as previously mentioned. Similarly, in each generation, when one studies Torah for its own sake, which is the rung of Moses,¹² he becomes as a bridegroom to the Torah, and then "to him are revealed the Torah's secrets," as a woman

revealing secrets of her heart only to her husband. Understand this.

Or one could render **Jethro priest of Midian . . . heard** in its plain meaning: that **Jethro heard** what was produced for Israel from the powers of judgment which affected them in Egypt. That is, [he heard] that they had been enslaved in toil ('avodah) which is equivalent, with one included, to 'elohim, the root of the powers of judgment, [which] for them was made a **priest**, the attribute hesed.¹³ As was made clear above,¹⁴ all of the plagues which were affliction and manifestations of severity for Egypt, were for Israel powers of total love and compassion, and healing. In addition, the verse "You shall say: It is the passover sacrifice to YHVH, because He passed over [the houses of the Israelites]" [Exodus 12:27] is rendered by the Targum as "it is the sacrifice of sparing [to God], for he spared (has). . . ." The attribute of hesed was aroused for them, and all the forces of judgment were sweetened. Understand this.

Further, there is an ethical hint in the words **Jethro heard**. He **heard**: that is, it is desirable to listen constantly, and to understand and become wise. **Jethro** (yitro): What will one have left for all his labour? For "all is vanity," and empty, and "neither silver nor gold will accompany one" [to his grave].¹⁵ Rather, what one stores up in the Torah, and that path, good and upright before God, in which he takes care to instruct his children -- this will be left him from all his toil. It is fitting for him to constantly pay attention to, and fix his thought on this.

One could also say [regarding] **Jethro heard**, that it is proper to understand and consider that which is surplus (yitron) and superfluous, in order to cast it aside and not pursue luxuries, but be satisfied with what one has and with what is needed. This is easy to understand.

Alternatively, one might render **Jethro heard . . . all that God had done for Moses and for Israel His people, how YHWH had brought Israel out of Egypt** along the lines of the Midrash that in Egypt the creation of the world was renewed. Look there.¹⁶ In [the account of] the Creation it is written, "In the beginning God ('elohim) created. . . . And God ('elohim) saw...": all is the aspect 'elohim. Commenting on "In the beginning" (be-reshit), [Bereshit Rabba 1]

states that the world was created for the sake of Israel, who are called reshit, and for the sake of the Torah, called reshit.¹⁷ Look there. But Moses is the secret of the Torah, as it is written, "She saw that he was good" [Exodus 2:2], and there is no good except Torah [Mishnah Avot 6:3].¹⁸ This is the sense of **Jethro heard**: he understood **all that God had done for Moses**. The entire creation which the Blessed Holy One created in his universe was **for Moses**, that is, for the sake of Moses who is in actuality the Torah, as noted above, **and for Israel His people**, who are called reshit. How did [Jethro] understand this? [From] **how YHVH had brought Israel out of Egypt**. He saw the Blessed Holy One's love and affection for Israel, in that He violently overthrew the whole natural order and the determinations of the planets for Israel's sake, by means of Moses.¹⁹ There a renewal of the world occurred, and from this he observed and understood that the entire world was created only for the sake of Israel and for the sake of the Torah which Israel received.

Understand this, for this was the purpose of coming out of Egypt -- so that Israel would receive the Torah. For this was the first utterance [to Moses, Exodus 3:12] "When you have brought the people out of Egypt you shall serve God upon this mountain," [referring to] the reception of the Torah on Mount Sinai, as is clarified above.

Understand this.

Or, one could explain that [the verse] **Jethro heard . . . and for Israel his people** enumerates the two rungs which the Blessed Holy One gave to our master Moses, peace be upon him. The first is what **God had done for Moses:** namely, that God, may He be blessed, made Moses like 'elohim, as it is written, "See, I place you in the role of God ('elohim) [to Pharaoh]" [Exodus 7:1]. The second is that **He** caused **Israel** to be **his people** -- Moses' [people].²⁰ All of them are the sparks and parts of Moses, and he is the one who includes them all, and is their leader and head.²¹ This is the sense of **Jethro heard**. Understand this.

[I . . . Jethro, am coming to you, with your wife] and her two sons. . . . of whom one was named Gershom, for he [Moses] said, "I have been a stranger in a strange land"; and the second²² was named Eliezer, for "the God of my father is my help, and He delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh."

(Exodus 18:6, 3-4)

The change of language in the passage must be understood: regarding Gershom it is written, **for he said**, "I have been a stranger" etc., but in regard to Eliezer, "for he said" the God of my father etc. is not used. This should be

explained in terms of the plain meaning [of the text]: if **he said** had been written here, it would have been consistent to write **the God of my father was my help**; as **I was a stranger** [indicates] that he named him after an event which had happened to him previously, but not at present. But in truth, the help of God is constant throughout all times, and therefore he used not the past but the present tense: **the God of my father is my help**, continuously, in every single moment. **And he delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh** indicates such an event; then also He came to with **my help** to deliver **me from the sword of Pharaoh**.²³ Therefore the phrase **for he said** is not used. This is easy to understand.

**You shall seek out from among all the people
capable men who fear God, men of truth who
hate ill-gotten gain; and set these over them
as chiefs of thousands . . .**

(Exodus 18:21)

This should be interpreted as an allusion, according to that which I heard from my master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, on the Mishnah [Avot 5:16]: "There are four types among those who give charity . . . [including] he who wishes neither to give nor that others should give [(such a one is) the wicked]." He asked, What kind of character is this? And he replied that all are called qualities, for the zaddik derives

awe and moral instruction for himself even from that person who has this attribute. And this is the meaning of "Who is wise? One who learns from everyone" [Mishnah Avot 4:1]. One can learn instructive and awe-inspiring things from every person, even of the lowest levels. It is to this that the passage **You shall seek out from among the people** alludes: You can see the service of God, may He be blessed, **among all the people**, even those at the lowest levels who do not have a mind like yours; **capable men**, that is, those from the side of hesed; ones **who fear God**, meaning those from the side of gevurah; and **men of truth** [who represent] the attribute of Jacob, etc.²⁴ **And set these over them as chiefs of thousands [chiefs of hundreds . . . fifties . . . tens]:** each has authority in accord with his level, but you have no need of this, for you can see **among all the people** -- in hands and eyes, in lines and wrinkles, as mentioned in the Tikkunim [Tikkunei Zohar, tikkun 70, p. 132b].²⁵ One who is enlightened will understand.

One could also say that **You shall seek out from among all the people** should be explained according to: "Who is wise? One who learns from everyone" [Pirkei Avot 4:1]. This is the difference between the title "wise" (hakham) and "student of the wise" (talmid hakham). Moses was the wise

man and teacher of all Israel, and they were at the level of the student of the wise. This is what the verse implies. **You, who are wise, shall seek out from among all the people:** in other words, you will be able to see and perceive and attain enlightenment from all the people; for the title hakham is applied by the Gemara to "one who learns from everyone."

**If you do this -- and God so commands you--
you will be able to stand; and this entire
people will also reach their place in peace.**
(Exodus 18:23)

On this verse, Rashi comments: "Consult the Mighty One. [If he commands you to do so, you will stand,] but if he stays your hand, you will not be able to stand." One must understand Rashi's words, for is it not obvious that if God, may He be blessed, were to stay his hand he would certainly not give him the strength to be able to stand?

I must explain this [with] that which God, in his compassion and great love, has graced me, as an allusion and according to that which I heard from my master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come. Once a man came to him and asked that he teach him Torah,²⁶ and he answered him using this verse: "For the lips of a priest guard knowledge, and people seek

Torah from his mouth, for he is a messenger of the Lord of Hosts" [Malachi 2:7]. The sages, may their memory be a blessing, interpreted [this in Mo'ed Katan 17a]: "If the teacher is like 'an angel of the Lord of Hosts,' 'people seek Torah from his mouth,' and if not, not." And he [the Ba'al Shem] asked, "How can one find such a teacher in this generation, who will be like 'an angel of the Lord of Hosts'?" One must also understand the words "seek from his mouth," for it would have been correct to say "they hear from his mouth." And he, may his memory be a blessing, said that the interpretation is as follows: "If the teacher is like 'an angel of the Lord of Hosts'" suggests that, like an angel, who remains continuously on one level, so he [the teacher] always remains on one level.

There is the level of katnut, smallness, and the level of gadlut, greatness;²⁷ and the phrase "if the teacher is like an angel" implies is that he has the attribute of "standing," like an angel. Even though it is impossible to stay on one level constantly -- for sometimes he falls into katnut -- in any case, what is katnut for him is gadlut for another person; only in relation to his own greatness is it smallness. This rung is called "standing." In other words, he does not fall greatly into lowliness and katnut; it is only considered katnut in contrast with his gadlut, each according to his degree. Then "people seek Torah from his mouth" -- seek, exactly! That is, it is permissible to ask

and to beseech him to speak words of Torah, for it is not necessary to wonder whether he is now at the level of katnut and unable to teach Torah. He has certainly not fallen into katnut such as this, for in this regard he is [on] the rung [called] "standing"; and [his] katnut is relative to his level and degree. [His words extend] to this point.

In such a way should one explain the hint in the verse **If you do this . . . you will be able to stand** ('amod): you will be able to be on the level of standing ('omed), like "an angel of the Lord of Hosts," and all Israel will "seek Torah from his mouth." This is what Rashi explained: "If He stays your hand, you will not be able to stand": you will not be able to be on this level, to be "standing." **This entire people will also reach their place in peace** [is then understood] in light of the verse "May God give strength to His people [May God bless His people with peace]": when God, may He be blessed, wanted to give the Torah to his people Israel, He blessed them with peace.²⁸ Thus it says, **You will be able to stand**: you will be able to be on the level of "standing," and "they will seek Torah from his mouth," and be blessed with peace.²⁹ Thus, they **will reach their place in peace**. Understand this.

You shall be My own treasure (segullah).

(Exodus 19:5)

The hint in this should be explained, namely, that Israel should be bound together in a single bond and should have unity with one another.³⁰ For there are the two signs: segol and segolta. The difference between them is that the vowel segol is thus -- -- but the cantillation sign segolta is thus -- ; and in either case each needs its partner, even if one is written below the other.³¹ An example regarding this comes from accounting: there is a mark called null, which does not indicate any quantity in itself but serves to indicate the value of the digit to its left, which is thereby increased, as is known. It turns out that adding one mark, even though it is nothing in itself, serves to greatly increase anything to its left by hundreds, thousands, and ten-thousands. Such is the moral in the case of the Israelites: it is good for them to be constantly united together in one bond; then, even those who are inferior are of use to their companions, who can sanctify themselves all the more and grasp [the realm of] ideas more fully, many times more, as in the previous example. And when they are united below, then they cause their root above to be united as well.³²

This is what **You shall be My own segullah** suggests: you will be like the segol and segolta; for what is above needs what is below it, and what is below needs what is above it. Similarly, you will always be bound in one bond, and

then your root will also be unified. This explains **You shall be My own treasure** -- precisely Mine! You will also be a treasure in the world above, when you are in a single unity below.³³ Understand this.

You shall be My own treasure among all the peoples [for all the earth is Mine].³⁴

We should explain this along the lines of the Gemara [Berakhot 8a], which reads, "[Since the Temple was destroyed], God has only the four cubits of the halakhah."³⁵ Maimonides raised the objection that the Blessed Holy One should have created only those four cubits. He offered the solution that all the world was created to attend to such a one [Berakhot 6b], for when it is necessary to plow, at the time of plowing . . . what will become of Torah? Therefore, He had to create the whole world to prepare for the individual all that is necessary, in order that he be free for the service of God, may He be blessed.³⁶ Notice also that Rashi explains segullah as "a beloved treasure". Look there. And the Sages, may their memory be a blessing, said, "the Blessed Holy One has only the treasure of the fear of Heaven, as it is said, 'the fear of YHVH is his treasure'" [Berakhot 33b, citing Isaiah 33:6]."

This is the sense of **You shall be My own treasure**, namely, the "beloved treasure," which is the fear of Heaven: you will be in awe of God, may He be blessed. This also is called the "four cubits of the halakhah."³⁷ Moreover, this is the meaning of "All the peoples of the earth shall see that the name YHWH is proclaimed over you, and they shall stand in fear of you" [Deuteronomy 28:10]: because you will be in awe of God, therefore the peoples of the earth will be afraid of you.³⁸ **Among all the peoples** corresponds to that which is stated in the holy Zohar [3:160b on Numbers 14:9]: "'Have no fear of the people of the country, for they are our food': they themselves prepare [food every day] for those who exert themselves in Torah." This is the sense of **among all the peoples, for all the earth is mine**: the whole world was created only to attend to this -- "they themselves prepare food."³⁹ Understand this.

You shall not make yourself a sculptured image, nor any likeness.

(Exodus 20:4)

According to the explanation in the 'Or ha-Ḥayyim,⁴⁰ the word **yourself** refers to an individual's personality, to which **any likeness** undoubtedly refers as well.⁴¹ Thus one should interpret the allusion in this verse along the lines of what is suggested in the holy Zohar [2:163b]: ẓaddikim or

worthy ones or wise ones of the generation are the face of the Shekhinah in substance;⁴² she is concealed [within them], but they are clearly visible. Similarly, in several places [we read that] the Shekhinah actually dwells within them, and that a certain person's face is actually the face of Shekhinah.⁴³ In the same way, the Targum renders the verse "The shouting for the king is among them" [Numbers 23:21] as "the Shekhinah of their king is among them" -- "among them" precisely: actually within them!⁴⁴ They who are not at the level mentioned above are not on this rung. They are nothing but the resemblance, likeness, and image of God, but not actually of God; and He dwells within them only in the sense that they were created in the image and likeness of God, which will never change.

This is like the parable of the Sages, may their memory be a blessing, on the passage: "His body shall not remain on the tree . . . for one hanging is an affront to God" [Deuteronomy 21:23]: This is like two brothers, one a king and one a robber. The robber was caught and hanged, and the king commanded that he be taken down, for one who saw him hanging might say, "the likeness of the king is hanging there," and this is no honor to the king. Look there [Sanhedrin 46b]. This applies to every individual, who is the likeness and image of the King: he is only the semblance

of the King, but not of the King in actuality; nor does the King dwell in him. But those who are at the level mentioned above -- the level of zaddikim, or worthy ones, or the wise -- are His faces, the actual face of Shekhinah, and He dwells within them, as if it were possible.⁴⁵

This is how one should explain **You shall not make yourself a sculptured image**. As I have already explained, in everything there is an aspect of purity and clarity and an aspect of muddiness, sediment and refuse. These are the aspects of early figs and first fruits. Understand this, for it needs extended clarification, though we are not now [involved] in such a sermon. I have also trusted that the intelligent will understand this matter from our previous and repeated words.⁴⁶ This is the meaning of **You shall not make yourself a sculptured image**: [A sculptured image (fesel)] is the refuse (pesolat), the aspect of dregs and muddiness, **nor any likeness**. In other words, **you shall not make yourself** so that you are only a likeness and image of the King, the Lord of Hosts, as in the parable of the two brothers noted above. Rather, see that you [attain] the state of being His face, the actual face of Shekhinah. "The Shekhinah dwells among them," and, as if it were possible, they are of the King Himself. Understand this.

And all the people saw the thunderings. . . .
 (Exodus 20:15)⁴⁷

This should be interpreted in light of the parable that I heard from my master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come:

There was one playing very beautifully -- with great sweetness -- on a musical instrument, and those who heard it could not restrain themselves because of the power of its sweetness and pleasure, but danced almost to the ceiling out of sheer pleasure, loveliness and sweetness. Whoever was closer or came near to hear the instrument had even more pleasure and danced all the more. But in the midst of this came one who was deaf. He heard nothing of the sound of the sweet music, but only saw people dancing wildly, and to him they seemed like people who had gone crazy. He said to himself, "Pleasure, what use is it?"⁴⁸ In truth, if he had been wise, and had understood that it was because of the great, sweet pleasure of the instrument's sound, he too would have danced. The moral is clear.

In this way one should interpret **all the people saw the thunderings**: God, may He be blessed, caused the light of his divinity to appear to all of them as one, so that together they all grasped it when they saw the extent of joy, for "hosts of angels led them back."⁴⁹ They understood that it was on account of the sweetness and loveliness of the light of the holy Torah and compelled themselves to listen to

the Torah's voice. Even though they had been a bit deaf in that they had not heard the thunderings, all were made aware -- their eyes wide open -- so that they saw the great gaiety and joy. They understood that it was indeed **the thunderings**, that is, the loveliness and sweetness of the Torah's voice. Even though they themselves did not perceive this loveliness of the Torah, they understood by means of the joy that it certainly came from the power of the Torah's loveliness, and therefore they pushed themselves to listen to the voice itself--perhaps they would grasp and comprehend the sweetness of the light of Torah.⁵⁰ One who is enlightened will understand.

Or the following could be said:

All the people perceived the thunder and lightning . . . they fell back and stood at a distance. And they said to Moses, "You speak to us [and we will obey; but let not God speak to us, lest we die]." Moses said to the people, "Be not afraid; for God has come only in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may be upon you [so that you do not sin]."

(Exodus 20:15-17)

In this there are profound matters, in my humble opinion, which God, in his compassion and great love, has granted to me, and I will explain in brief.

It is known that if Israel had not said to Moses, **You speak to us**, but had listened to all the words from the mouth of the Blessed Holy One Himself, then the evil urge would

have been abolished and they would never have entered into sin.⁵¹ However, they brought about [the opposite] through their words to Moses, **You speak to us**. As the Sages explained, this teaches that Moses became as weak as a woman.⁵² This is apparent from my master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, [who taught] that learning from a zaddik is a great thing, and all the more so from the Blessed Creator himself: their Master's strength would certainly be in the students. Just as He is alive and His words live and endure, so would it be with the students: they would live and endure forever, and the [power of the divine] word would never cease. But this is not the case since they heard [it] from a mouth of flesh and blood.

But it is necessary to understand that they did indeed hear "I am [YHVH your God]" and "You shall have no [other gods]" [the first two commandments (Exodus 20:2-3)] from the mouth of the Mighty One Himself.⁵³ Therefore the text explains what caused them to say **You speak to us**, so that they did not hear [all the commandments] from the Blessed Holy One's mouth: **For all the people perceived the thunder and lightning . . . and the mountain smoking**. In other words, as the Zohar Hadash says [41 a-b], some of them were paying attention to the thunder, and some were looking at the lightning, but only a few were aware of the actual words "I am." Because of this a curtain was created, dividing them from "I am"; through this **they fell back and**

stood at a distance. In other words, a curtain came into being, keeping them at a distance from the Creator, may He be blessed. This caused them to say to Moses, **You speak to us** through the dividing curtain.

This is also why our master Moses, peace be upon him, answered them, **Be not afraid; for God has come only in order to test (nassot) you.** Nassot expresses raising, as in "raise an ensign (nes) [over the peoples]" [Isaiah 62:10]. In other words, the Blessed Holy One wants to raise you to a great rung, namely, **that you do not sin.** As He is eternal and always exists, so also all of you will be complete and exist forever through the 248 positive commandments and 365 prohibitions, without any deficiency, which is called sin.⁵⁴ Understand all of this.

There is another profound implication in this, which I will explain with the utmost brevity.

It is said, "'I am' ('Anokhi) is an abbreviation of 'ana nafshi katavit yahavit, 'I myself wrote it and gave it'" [Yalkut Shimoni 1:286]. This is the secret of the vital soul, nefesh, and within it the secret of the spirit, ruah, and the soul, neshamah. As my master and grandfather said, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, as with the mystery of "make [the ark] with bottom,

second and third decks" [Genesis 6:16], so it is with the secret of nefesh, ruah, and neshamah. Understand! In explanation, he said to search the letters, that is, to search for the secret light of divinity that is in them.⁵⁵ Understand this.

This is the purpose of creating humanity with the Torah, the mizvot, and service. I have already explained elsewhere that this is the secret of "The Torah of YHVH is perfect, restoring the soul" [Psalm 19:8], referring to Torah for its own sake. Look there.⁵⁶ If Israel had actually attached themselves to the divine words "I am [YHVH your God]" and "You shall have no [other gods]" and had all been in that "place," there could not possibly have been negation, God forbid, for He lives and endures, and His words live and endure, as is explained above. However, many of them paid attention to the thunder and lightning; and these are the secret of the angels, where there are the good and evil urges. But the zaddikim and the souls (neshamot) who actually attached themselves to the secret of "I am [YHVH]," as previously mentioned, live and endure, and their words live and endure, forever; and "no iniquity will befall a zaddik" [Proverbs 12:21].⁵⁷

"You speak to us, and we will obey . . . "
(Exodus 20:16)

"And God said [to Moses: 'I have heard the plea that this people made to you;] they did well [to speak thus]. Oh that they had [such a heart as this always, to revere me and follow all my commandments]." (Deuteronomy 5:25-26)

The explanation is that there are two kinds of service. At times one receives a great enthusiasm from above without any arousal from below. But at [other] times, service requires preparation and arousal: one must wrap himself in love and great awe, and examine and contemplate the exaltedness of the Creator, may He be blessed; after which he connects himself to the worlds.⁵⁸ And this is enough for one who understands.

Now it was this first kind of service that came about during the giving of the Torah, for the Blessed Holy One poured love and awe upon them. For this reason they said, **"You speak to us,"** meaning, we do not want to engage in the kind of service without arousal from below through searching and arousing, **lest we die**. The explanation is that sometimes we will fall from this level [of "inspired" service] and we will not know how to ascend. Instead, **you speak**, for Moses was the aspect of knowledge (da'at), "and by knowledge the rooms are filled" [Proverbs 24:4]. Then we will never be ashamed, for even though we will fall from [that] level, we

can serve on the basis of our original awareness, and follow its traces.⁵⁹ To this the Blessed Holy One said, "They did well to speak thus. Oh that they had [such a heart as this] always" to serve me in arousal and contemplation -- "always"! Consider this matter carefully.

In the Midrash Rabbah on portion Va-'Ethannan [Devarim Rabbah 7:10 on Deuteronomy 5:26], "Oh that they had such a heart as this." Rabbi Meir gave an example to which the matter can be compared: to a thief and one who has been robbed. Who is greater: the thief or the one robbed? One must say, the one robbed, as it is written [Psalm 78:36-37], "They deceived Him with their speech, lied to Him with their tongues; their hearts were inconstant toward Him." Therefore it says, "Oh that they had [such a heart as this]!"⁶⁰ This is puzzling and not understandable.

However, in my humble opinion, it seems that two interpretations regarding what Israel contended and what the Blessed Holy One answered, explain the difficulty here. The first [interpretation] is that they pleaded, "**You speak**, for if God speaks to us we will not be able to bear the brightness and great divine service out of fear; rather, our desire is to serve Him in simple ways."⁶¹ Therefore, we will receive [the word] by means of an intermediary so that the service

will not be more burdensome than we can bear." However, the second interpretation is that they spoke thus with their mouths, but their idea was as described above -- to serve through searching and contemplation. So what they said bore two interpretations, and Moses supposed that their idea was to serve in searching. But the Blessed Holy One answered him, "'Oh that they had such a heart' as you suppose from their words, and more, to fear Me 'always'. Oh, that their thoughts and hearts always and constantly might be in the service noted above; but now their hearts are not as you suppose, but as in the first interpretation" [i.e., desiring simplicity].

Which interpretation is proved to be right, the first or the second? We find, to be exact, that the first interpretation is true, for what the Blessed Holy One says in the passage, "they did well to speak thus; Oh that they had such a heart as this" is a difficulty whichever way you take it. If God scrutinizes the heart, why would He have said "to speak thus" if it were not the case that their words were good, but their hearts not as Moses supposed them to be? For this reason, God replied to him, "Oh that their hearts were like their words."

Accordingly, it turns out that here was [a case of] "one thing in the mouth and another in the heart" [Pesahim 113b]; and it is known that when speech utters what is not in the heart, the utterance is called a thief, and the heart

robbed. This is the meaning of R. Meir's teaching, for he wanted to compel, and to show [the solution to be] according to the first interpretation out of the strength of the difficulty [in the phrase] "to speak thus", as already noted. Therefore, he said that the Blessed Holy One desires truth in the heart, for that is the essential thing, not speech. For the action of the one who is robbed is greater than the action of the thief, when it is in his [the former's] power to make it so that he will not be robbed; and it is certainly in the heart's power to protest so that it will not be robbed [i.e., deceived]. It was for this purpose that the Blessed Holy One said, "What does it matter that 'they did well to speak thus'? 'Oh that they had such a heart' -- that they would not allow themselves to be robbed! But 'they deceived Him with their speech' and 'their hearts were inconstant.'"⁶² However, the opinion of the rest of the Tannaim was in accord with the interpretation noted previously on the passage "Oh that they had such a heart."⁶³ The one who is enlightened will understand. Consider this carefully.

You shall not make, with Me, gods of silver.
(Exodus 20:20)

This should be interpreted as an allusion, according to what is said in the holy Zohar: When Israel improve their

deeds and make them worthy, then the Shekhinah glorifies herself, "See now, my son, with what I come to you." Look there. Then she comes without shame before her Lord, as it is written in the verse of Lekhah Dodi, "Be not ashamed nor abashed. . . ." ⁶⁴ However, when there is no zaddik in the land, then shame (kisufin) and disgrace are brought about for the Shekhinah, as if it were possible, because she has nothing with which to glorify herself before the Creator, may He be blessed. This is the interpretation of **You shall not make with me:** that is, [You shall not make] of me **gods of silver** (kesef). ⁶⁵ Kesef expresses shame [kissufa] and disgrace. Therefore the interpretation is, **You shall not make** Me so that I become a god of silver -- that, as if it were possible, she come in shame. ⁶⁶ Understand this.

ZAV

YHVE spoke to Moses, saying: Command (zav) Aaron and his sons thus: This is the Torah of the burnt-offering: it is that which goes up from where it is burned upon the altar all night until morning, while the fire on the altar will be kept burning on it. The priest shall dress in his linen raiment, with linen breeches next to his body; and he shall take up the ashes unto which the fire has consumed [the burnt offering and place them beside the altar].

(Leviticus 6:1-3)

Rashi's explanation reads, "zav is nothing but an expression of urging, immediate and for all time. . . . In particular, the text needs to goad where there is a lack of money." Now certainly, the Torah is eternal, and applies constantly, in every generation; and in my humble opinion, these holy texts contain a hint showing God's path to the zaddikim, the wise of the generation, [and particularly] how they can draw the deprived souls of Israel -- may the Merciful One save us -- close to God, may He be blessed and exalted. This was also the work of Aaron and his sons, who brought the sacrifices of Israel -- the sin offerings and guilt offerings and burnt offerings, each according to its attribute and what it required. Through this they raised up and brought near the souls of Israel, each in accord with his need and his degree.¹ This is the reason that the "urging"

is "immediate and for all time": even though there are no sacrifices today, nevertheless zaddikim of every generation bring near the holy souls of Israel through their pure prayer and their Torah, which they speak in absolute truth, with devotion of the heart, in awe and love.

The next passage, **This is the Torah of the burnt-offering:** it is that which goes up, can be understood as follows: It is known that Torah which is not for its own sake does not fly upward and has no ascent. But one who studies Torah for its own sake -- this is the Torah which rises above. With regard to "for its own sake (li-shemah)," it is known from the writings that it is for the sake of he (leshem he): that is, so that the final he, which is the Shekhinah, as it were, be united with YHV so that YHVH, the Name, be made complete -- the union of the Blessed Holy One and his Shekhinah.² It is also known that he has three spellings, h-y, h-', and h-h; and it turns out that the three letters that complete the spelling of he themselves spell hi'. This, then, is what the verse **This is the Torah of the burnt offering** ('olah) is suggesting: this [Torah for its own sake] is the Torah that rises ('olah) above. **It** (hi') **is that which goes up** suggests that when the intention in [one's study] is to raise up he -- when it is for its own sake, for the sake of he, whose three spellings [yield the word] hi'-- this is the Torah that ascends and flies above.

From where it is burned upon the altar all night until morning: Altar, mizbeah, is a metonym for affliction, like the altar of expiation mentioned in the 'Or ha-Hayyim.³ The sense of **from where it is burned** is that one should burn in his heart **upon the altar** (ha-mizbeah), that is, [with concern for] the he-mizbeah, in other words, the afflictions of the Shekhinah, as if it were possible.⁴ **All night** suggests that she is in exile, which is like night; and **until morning** that the redemption will shine forth. Then "Come near to me and redeem me" [Psalm 69:19] will become a reality, and the light of all worlds will shine. **The fire of the altar will be kept burning on it:** in other words, the fire of enthusiasm will burn in one's heart **upon the altar**, constantly, at every single moment. **The priest**, that is, one who serves God, **will dress in his linen raiment** (middo vad), an expression for solitude (bedidut): he should consider that he alone (levado) is the only one in the world, and that all the worlds are dependent on him. As the Gemara states, "Each person must say, 'The entire world was created for my sake'" [Sanhedrin 37a]. This has already been explained above.⁵ **With linen breeches** (u-mikhnesei vad) suggests one who brings (makhnis) this solitariness into his heart, and teaches it the fear of Heaven -- **next to his body:** he will draw himself close to the zaddik.

We should interpret the words, **he shall take up the ashes unto which the fire has consumed**, in the same manner in

which the master, the Maggid, may his memory be a blessing, answered one who asked him how enthusiasm for God can be obtained: "One who needs fire searches among the ashes." This also applies here. **He shall take up the ashes** means that one should regard himself as ashes, and in this way fervor for the Creator, may He be blessed, will be aroused in his heart.⁶ This, then, is the sense of **he shall take up the ashes unto which the fire has consumed**: one should lift up the aspect of ashes, and attain the fire of enthusiasm. **And place them beside the altar** suggests that, in this way, he takes the sufferings of the Shekhinah, as if it were possible, into his heart, as already mentioned, **until morning**, until the light of morning, the light of all the worlds, shines forth.

This, then, is the meaning of the "urging, immediate and for all time," as noted above. And this is what Rashi implied in the clarity of his pure language: "In particular is it necessary to goad where there is a lack of money, (hesron kis)": Kis [in gematria] is 90, and this is a lack; that is, one is missing -- the Head ('aluf) of the world-- and there is no union, God forbid.⁷ Therefore, it is particularly necessary to goad, to bring about unification. Understand this.

In accord with what has just been mentioned, we should give the following explanation of [the words from the Haggadah,] "It is this (ve-hi') which has sustained our fathers and us. For not just one has risen up to destroy us, [but in every generation they rise up against us to destroy us;] but the Blessed Holy One delivers us from them":⁸ It is necessary to study Torah for its own sake, for the sake of he. And he has three spellings, which form [from the different letters used to complete each variant] the word hi'. But this is what is said, ve-hi': "It is this," the study of Torah for its own sake, which is for the sake of he and its three forms, "which has sustained our fathers and us."⁹ "For not just one" suggests that because there is not One, the Head of the world, in the Torah that one studies, "they rise up against us to destroy us." "But the Blessed Holy One" means that when the Blessed Holy One is there [in one's study], He "delivers us from them."¹⁰ This accords with what I heard from my master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, [on Hagigah 9b], "One who repeats his chapter 100 times is not like one who repeats it 100 times plus one" -- so that there is One in it, the Head and Beginning of the universe.

Further, we can explain the phrase, "For not just one has risen up to destroy us," according to that which is stated in the Tikkunim and in the holy Zohar: "'I am YHVH, I do not change,' [Malachi 3:6] but for sinners I am changed and hidden, covered in numerous garments. Even when one commits a transgression, God forbid, if the strength and vitality to do it had not been bestowed upon him, he certainly would not have been able to move a single limb to carry out the offense. However, this is hidden, and the wicked individual does not see it; and this brings about the exile of the Shekhinah.¹¹ This is the meaning of "not just one": When there is not "just One," without coverings, then it "rises up to destroy us." However, when there is "just One," that is, "the Blessed Holy One" without coverings, "He delivers us from them."¹² Understand this.

Or one could say the following on the verse, **This is the Torah of the burnt-offering: it is that which goes up from where it is burned upon the altar all night until morning . . .**

To explain this we must first explain the verse "By justice a king gives stability to the land; but one who exacts gifts ('ish terumot) ruins it" [Proverbs 29:4]. This

verse is not clear; even following the interpretation of the Sages, it is necessary to understand why it opens with "king," and closes with "one." In order to understand this, we will explain briefly.

It is known that the Blessed Holy One created the world with three qualities, the attributes of love and judgment, and the intermediate principle which is constituted from both of them and called justice. First, he had the idea to create the world in order to do good to his creatures and in order that they might recognize his great love. Afterwards, the creation itself was a contraction, which partakes of judgment and power. However, because the world cannot exist by the quality of judgment [alone], He joined judgment with compassion.¹³ These are the aspects Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and this is what is intimated in the verse, "God, the God YHVH ('El 'Elohim YHVH) spoke and summoned the world" [Psalm 50:1] -- with these three attributes he spoke and summoned the world."¹⁴ Look in the holy Zohar [3:65a].

Similarly, the world conducts itself in accord with these three qualities, sometimes in the measure of love (hesed), sometimes in the measure of judgment (din), God forbid, and sometimes in the measure of compassion, which is a balance of love and judgment. Now, when the world conducts itself in love, this is not just, for love is the quality of goodness to all, to the wicked as well as the good. No distinction is recognized "between one who is righteous and

one who is evil, between one who serves God and one who does not" [Malachi 3:18]. As the prophet Isaiah, may he rest in peace, said [Isaiah 27:4]: "I have no wrath" to go against the attribute of judgment.¹⁵ So, too, when the world behaves in accord with judgment -- far be it from us! -- it cannot endure at all; for who is righteous before Him in judgment?¹⁶ However, when the world is conducted according to the quality of justice, which is the middle way, it proceeds as it should. Then good and lovingkindness are for "those who love Him and keep His commandments, to a thousand generations" [Deuteronomy 7:9], and rigor and judgment are for those who disobey Him; and then those who serve God are distinguished from those who do not serve him.

Moreover, it is known that the reign of heaven is like the reign of earth;¹⁷ as the world conducts itself below, so do they arouse the conduct of the Divine, blessed be He and blessed be His name, in his attributes, as if it were possible. Therefore, it [the Divine] changes at times, because it is in accord with the conduct of the world. This is related to the fact that the zaddikim and hasidim of the generation are from the side of love, hesed, as the Sages said, "Who is a hasid? One who performs hesed with his Creator (kono)" [Zohar 2:114b (Ra'aya Meheimna)].¹⁸ But the word kono has two explanations: First, it is the same as Creator -- the one who created him. Secondly, it refers to tikkun, as Rashi explains the verse [Is. 1:3] "An ox knows

its owner," konehu: "the one who readies it (metakkeno) for plowing." This alludes to the individual's soul, with which he performs hesed, as in the saying of the Sava of Mishpatim on the verse "If a man sell his daughter to be a servant, she shall not go out as the male servants do" [Exodus 21:7]. Look there [Zohar 2:96b-97a]. "His daughter" is the soul which descends into this world in order to tend to the needs of the body in this world; for the soul -- that is, the intellect and wisdom, which give life to the person -- "does not go out as the male servants do." In other words, in its departure from the world, it does not fear anything in the world, as do the servants who leave their master with fear in their hearts because of the sense of domination fixed in their minds. Rather, it departs in liberty, as in the verse, "Happy are you, O land, when your king is the son of free men" [Kohelet 10:17], and "her food, clothing, and conjugal rights he shall not diminish [Exodus 21:10]." Look in the Sava.¹⁹ Therefore the zaddikim and the hasidim who do this, who perform hesed with their Creator, are certainly on the side of the powers of love, and are called persons of form.²⁰ But persons of matter are on the side of the powers of rigor, and the wicked belong to the powers of rigor within rigor.²¹ Understand this. Therefore when the world conducts itself below in accord with the people of form, and they are the rulers and directors of the generation in their quality of love, then God's attribute of love is aroused, may He be

blessed. The reverse also occurs, God forbid, as it is written: "When the wicked rule the people groan" [Proverbs 29:2]. Look there.²²

However, it must be understood that the essentially just course of affairs lies in the world's conducting itself in the middle way; and we must understand how this is aroused in the lower world.

In fact, in this world, it is certainly impossible that the world conduct itself in accordance with the zaddikim and the hasidim, as I heard from the learned Rabbi of Polnoyye, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, in the name of Maimonides, may his memory be a blessing. Maimonides raised the question about the statement [in Berakhot 8a], "[Since the Temple was destroyed] God has only the four cubits of the halakhah." If so, why did He create the entire world and all that is in it? He had only to create the human being, who is the mystery of the four cubits of the halakhah. He explained that the entire world was created for the sake of that person who is the four cubits of halakhah; if that person had had to plow during the season for plowing and to harvest at harvest time -- and similarly, when he had need of clothes to wear had to prepare all that was necessary by himself -- when would his Torah have been done? It would not have been possible for him to be the four cubits of the halakhah. Therefore the Blessed Holy One created the world and its contents.²³ One plows and

another sows, one harvests and another mills, and yet another prepares clothing and gives it to him, so that he will not be required to disturb himself from his work, the work of heaven. In this way, the entire world has a partnership and connection with the four cubits of the halakhah. So it turns out that it would be impossible for the world to conduct itself [only] in accord with the people of form and of hesed, for they and the world would, God forbid, enter a state of negation because of their concern with the service of the Creator, may He be blessed.²⁴ Therefore He joined the people of matter with them to take care of the world's needs, so that they not be disturbed from their work, the work of heaven.

When the world conducts itself in such a manner--when people of matter know and understand that they take care of the world's needs only so that the people of form might have comfort and be filled with all the good things that they need, so that they not be disturbed or stopped, God forbid, from serving Him, may He be blessed; when, therefore, [the people of matter] submit to [the people of form] in regard to all that the latter command them to do, and look after them, supplying their needs; and when, certainly, in like manner, the people of form take it upon themselves to look after the people of matter in all that they do, so they do not leave the path in attending to the cares of the world and forget their Creator, God forbid, reminding them each time; and when

they guide and direct them in the straight path according to the law and the Torah, and, in accordance with the divine intellect, show them "the way they are to go and the practices they are to follow" [Exodus 18:20] -- then a partnership and linkage is created between the people of matter and the people of form. Through this, they arouse in the upper world that it also conduct the entire universe in compassion, which comprises love and rigor in the joining of those two attributes, and is called the measure of justice, or the quality of compassion. The forces of rigor are humbled and limited beneath the forces of love; hesed does not expand beyond what is necessary, and the destructive forces of rigor are sweetened; and the world operates in accord with compassion.²⁵

Along these lines, we can clarify the Talmud's passage in Bava Batra [74a]: Rabbah, the son of bar Hannah, was traveling in the desert. . . . [An Arab merchant joined us. . . . He said to me,] 'Come and I will show you where earth and heaven meet each other.' He saw that there were apertures. I took up my basket and put it in a window of heaven. When I had prayed, I looked but did not find it. I said, 'Is there a thief here?' They said, 'It is the wheel of heaven turning. Wait until tomorrow [and you will find it].'" Rabbah bar bar Hannah was making an allusion in accord with what has been said above, that the people of matter are made partners with the people of form by their

caring for each other -- one to give the other enough for his needs and livelihood, and the other to watch over him and guide him in the straight path. "Where earth and heaven meet" alludes to this. People of matter, who are like the earth, have a linkage and meeting with people of form, who are like heaven; they are joined together. "I saw that there were apertures" is speaking of windows, that is to say, they thereby have partnership and connection in the matter of watching over each other; and this is analogous to windows, for they pay attention and look after each other. "I took up my basket" was explained by Rashi as [referring to] the basket of bread, etc. This means that after he saw and understood that all the world is a single union, and that each needs the other, he turned away from all the considerations and cares of this world, from occupying himself with his upkeep, and entrusted his livelihood to God. This is the meaning of "and put it in a window of heaven. When I had prayed, I looked but did not find it": When I occupied myself in Torah and service, and did not find my livelihood, I said, "Are there thieves here?" This expresses astonishment: instead of justice and security, there is injustice and wickedness decreasing my livelihood, God forbid. "The earth is given [into the hands of the wicked; He covers] the faces of the judges" [Isaiah 9:24], almost exactly like thieves.²⁶ Understand this.

Then the sentence, "But they said to me, 'It is the wheel of heaven turning,'" is analogous to the parable that I heard from my master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come. It is like a king who conducts a war and has many soldiers. Some of them are foot-soldiers, and others ride on horseback. During the war, those who are on foot stand in joined ranks in battle, linked and interlocked with one another, and cannot leave, for they are bound together with rings of iron; and they stand in the depths of the battle, so that it is impossible for them to flee one way or another. But as for those on horseback, even though they are also in the battle, when fighting breaks out violently around them, they escape on their horses and do not risk their lives. The foot-soldiers, on the other hand, sacrifice themselves in battle for the glory of the king. When God has helped them win the war, then those on horseback come and take the spoil, because they have horses and can carry burdens on them. But the foot-soldiers do not take any of the spoil, except for a little bread and water in order to keep themselves alive at least for one more day, for the burden of the weight of the spoil is a heavy load for them, and the foot-soldier's life is enough spoil for him. He trusts: "Don't we all serve one king for his supreme glory? When I lack something in peace-time, then the cavalryman will give it to me from the great spoil which he took, for we serve one king. We

certainly have a greater share in this spoil than they do, for it was we who, with God's help, brought about the victory at the risk of our lives." But [those who were on horseback] do not do this, and do not want to give them even the food for one meal, saying that they brought about the victory.

The moral is clear. The people of form and service are the foot-soldiers, continually risking their lives for the glory of the king, the King of the world. They are the ones who win the war, bringing an end to all the accusers and adversaries who arise against them and desire to keep the divine influx from the world; through them the flow descends to the world. But those on horseback are the people of matter, who ride on great and good horses, their destinies.²⁷ At the time of victory, when bounty reaches the world, they snatch a great abundance; but the people of form are content with enough for each day, as is the way of the Torah and of trust.²⁸ And it is sufficient for them that, through the victory, the King's glory has been increased. They think that the people of matter will surely supply them enough for their needs, for they are really essential. But it does not seem so to [the people of matter],²⁹ and they do not want to give them anything. They say, "The water and the flow are ours." This is the sense of "the wheels of heaven": those who have luck seize the abundance. "Wait until tomorrow"--until, that is, the king rouses himself in his great love and considers his servants and their actions. Then, certainly,

God, in his great love, will give them all goodness. All who oppress you will be ashamed, and He, in his great mercy, will bring you relief with all good things, for He is the one who knows in truth that the victory depends on you and that the spoil and abundance should come, first of all, to you.³⁰

Now, then, we will explain that with which we began, "By justice a king gives stability to the land." Who are kings? The sages!³¹ When the "king", who is the wise person, God's servant, is in "justice" -- that is, at a midpoint between the people of matter and the people of form and service, the latter conducting the world, and the people of matter submitting to them so that their coarse and gross occupation does not extend more than necessary, only sustaining themselves and the wise, and the essential conduct of affairs is in accord with those who serve God -- then the land is stable. Then, in other words, the world has a sustained existence, for the divine qualities are automatically aroused so that the divine flow is also conducted in justice, as already noted. "But one who exacts gifts": When, however, there is an individual who separates one from the other,³² and no king is ruler in the world, but each one does what is right in his own eyes;³³ and materiality extends excessively, God forbid, then "he ruins it," God forbid. Understand this.

In this manner we can explain the mishnah in tractate Avot [3:5], "Rabbi Hanina ben Hakhinai says: One who wakes

in the night or walks by himself on the road and turns his heart to idle matters [is mortally guilty]." Now, day is the quality of love and of the righteous; and night is the aspect of rigor and of the wicked, "whose deeds are in darkness" [Isaiah 29:15], or of the people of matter who occupy themselves with the obscurities and muddiness of corporeality. It would be proper for there to be "there was evening and there was morning, one day" [Genesis 1:5]: that is, the people of matter and the people of form should join together and be one; for "morning" is hesed and the quality of the zaddikim, as in the verse "the morning was light" [Genesis 44:3]; and "evening" is the aspect of the people of matter, as has already been mentioned.³⁴ Let all be one unity.

As stated in the Midrash [Bereshit Rabba 2:5], He created the righteous, He created the wicked, and I do not know with which God is more pleased; but since it is written, "God saw that the light was good" [Genesis 1:4], one can say that God is more pleased with the deeds of the righteous, who are like light. It is further explained, in the name of my master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, that the wicked have been made into a throne for the righteous. Following our argument, the people of matter have been made into a throne for the people of form, as has already been said.

This is the moral given by the holy Tanna in his lucid words. The phrase "One who wakes (ha-ne'or) in the night" is like "He hurled (va-yena'er) [the Egyptians into the sea] [Exodus 14:27]," as explained by Rashi: "like a person who stirs the pot" from below to above. This is the explanation of the "one who wakes": he mixes himself "in the night", that is, he brings himself close to the people of matter or to the wicked, who are analogous to the night. To them he draws near; but he does not at all draw near to the people of hesed and of form. "The one who walks by himself on the road" [suggests the snake], because the snake travels alone.³⁵ And the snake spoke to Adam and Eve, as is known. The root of the matter is that God had commanded Adam, "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat" [Genesis 2:17]; and it is certain that this commandment contained the entire Torah, 248 positive mizvot and 365 prohibitions, in order to establish his life in eternity-- "by the pursuit of which one shall live" -- forever.³⁶ But the snake spoke falsely about God, saying that He had done this for His own good, and not for the good of humanity. As it is written in the verse [Genesis 3:5], "Your eyes shall be open, and you shall be like God." He did this to bring evil, God forbid, upon Adam and Eve, so that they would not be like God. For in truth, the opposite is the case. If Adam had been careful not to turn away from God's command, he would have been like God, for a "zaddik rules in awe of God," and

"the Blessed Holy One decrees, and a zaddik rescinds the decree."³⁷ Similarly, in the future the zaddikim will be like their Creator, as is stated in the Midrash on the verse "And Jacob was left alone" [Genesis 32:25]: "As the Blessed Holy One remembers the barren, revives the dead, and heals the sick, so also do the zaddikim" [Bereshit Rabba 77:1]. But when [Adam] departed from God's command, the opposite came about. In this manner one should explain "one who walks by himself on the road": namely, that he goes the way of the snake, which is always by itself. For the hasidim and people of form in a generation are the vitality and the soul of the people of matter; all their commandments and warnings are for the individual to do and by them to live eternally in "a world which is totally long-lasting".³⁸ But one who stirs himself into interminglings and partnership with the people of matter alone, and keeps away from the people of form, falls in level enough to do the work of the snake, by saying that all their [the people of form's] deeds and warnings are for their harm, and that they want to aggrandize themselves and humiliate them. But the truth lies with the former attributes, as already mentioned, for they have the strength of dominion and the "law (mishpat) of monarchy", [1 Samuel 10:25], and the people of matter will be humbled as the forces of rigor have to yield to the forces of love, as we have already said; or with the quality of righteousness.³⁹ And the rest of their warnings are for their good. But he

overturns things like the snake did when he said, "And you will be like God." So the "one who walks by himself on the road" is one who takes the way of the snake, travelling alone.⁴⁰

Then the phrase "and turns his heart to idle matters" is related to that which I heard from my master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, namely, that the king is the heart of all Israel, as Samuel said: "How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me" [1 Samuel 16:2]. He himself was afraid about going, for "if Saul hears of it" expresses understanding. Before the anointing of David, he was still king, and therefore he might hear and understand, as the heart hears and understands, and "he will kill me" -- but not on the return, for upon returning, David would already be king!⁴¹ Understand what derives from this: The king is the heart of Israel, and so it is in each and every generation. Who are kings? The wise. They are the heart of Israel. All the people of form are the heart of Israel. This is the meaning of "he turns his heart to idle matters": The wise person is actually his heart and his vitality, but he turns him away from himself and from the world, God forbid, and this brings about uselessness.⁴² Know that without doubt "he is mortally guilty."

Now let me clarify the mishnah in Avot [5:1], "By ten utterances was the world created. . . . Surely it could have been created by one utterance! But this was to exact punishment from the wicked, for they destroy the world created by ten utterances; and to give a rich reward to the righteous, for they sustain a world created by ten utterances." It is common knowledge that the ten utterances are the Ten Commandments; so now we will explain the Ten Commandments according to a parable, and the matter of the ten utterances will be self-evident.

It is like a wise king who wanted to give orders that a certain thing of wisdom be made for him, such as a crown or a royal palace. The wise and understanding ones, those who have wisdom, understanding, and knowledge, and whose hearts are eager to do the work, greatly wish to give pleasure to the king. If the king said but a single word to them, or even if they understood merely through a gesture the plan of the king's desire, they would certainly do it. The king has no need to speak with them at length. However, the king is a king of love, and wants everyone, both those far off and those close by,⁴³ to understand his conception, so that all of them may have a share in his crown and in the royal palace. What does he do? He extends himself like a chain from word to word in many utterances, limiting his great intelligence, and multiplying his holy words in order for them to understand the substance of his intention, and [to

give them] something to grasp in order to carry out his desire and his will. The moral is that all the utterances and creations of the world are parallel to the Ten Commandments and to the whole Torah, [given] "to till it and tend it" [Genesis 2:15] and to make from this a crown and diadem for the King.⁴⁴

But the root of the entire Torah is "I am YHVH your God," and "You shall have no other gods" [Exodus 20:2-3]; the rest of the Torah is merely 611 pieces of advice as to how to fulfill this, as is written in the holy Zohar [2:91a]. Certainly, the wise and those with understanding had no need for the entire Torah, but only for the one command, "I am." From this they automatically attained and understood the entire Torah, like our ancestor Abraham, peace be upon him, who fulfilled the whole Torah even though it had not yet been given [Mishnah Kiddushin, end]. And how did he know how to keep it, if not by coming to the following perception: he understood that the sphere of "I am YHVH your God" existed, and he certainly knew that there was the sphere of "other gods," God forbid, as is made clear in the interpretations of the Sages.⁴⁵ At first he worshipped the sun and moon, for he was of the opinion that they constituted divinity. But then he understood that these have One who guides them, and He is "I am." So it is with each individual, according to his degree: he who rejects other gods thus attains the sphere of "I am [YHVH your God]." Understand this, because it is an

important principle and a great gate. Now [Abraham] was a truly wise man, and he understood that which precludes "I am," such as unclean foods, or immorality, or wearing mingled fibers or the like among all the prohibitions. With his high, pure wisdom, he understood that [transgressing] any of the prohibitions expands the sphere of "other gods" around an individual; but the positive commands, such as honoring father and mother, and ones similar, increase the soul's strength in grasping "I am." Thus did he attain and fulfill the entire Torah.

Obviously, then, the Blessed Holy One needed only to speak "I am" before the wise and those with understanding, and they understood by themselves that there are "other gods". In their wisdom they heeded each of the prohibitions, for [such actions] cause damage to the soul in that they increase the sphere of "other gods." They also observed all the positive mizvot to enlarge, and to attach themselves to, the sphere of "I am [YHVH your God]," as did our ancestor Abraham, peace be upon him.⁴⁶ Understand this.

But the Blessed Holy One desired that even those with little knowledge should understand and grasp and join themselves to the sphere of "I am [YHVH your God]" and "You shall have no [other gods]". He diminished Himself, if it were possible, from command to command, into five positive mizvot and five prohibitions. As the Talmud notes [Kiddushin 31a], when the Blessed Holy One said "I am", the nations of

the world said, "He seeks merely His own honor," for they did not grasp the sense of "I am". But when He said, "Honor your father . . .", they returned to the first commandments, comprehending "I am [YHVH your God]" from [the precept of] honoring the physical father and mother. Similarly, "You shall have no other gods" can be understood from "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife" [Exodus 20:4], for that wise man, King Solomon, peace be upon him, compared a harlot to idolatry [Proverbs 5:3-10]. Understand this. But the Torah, which is the sphere of "I am," is like a good woman who keeps the covenant of the Companion ('aluf) of her youth.⁴⁷ It turns out that this descending chain of utterances, from command to command, took place in order that it [i.e., the revelation of "I am"] be known and grasped by everyone--like the wise person who, teaching in public and wanting everyone to understand, clothes [his] words in parable and figurative language; except that in the case of the Torah, parable and rhetoric are one and the same, as King Solomon said in the Book of Proverbs [1:6], "to understand a parable and a figure". Look up Rashi's explanation of this,⁴⁸ and understand.

Now this is what Scripture has said [Psalm 62:12-13]: "One thing God has spoken" -- that is, "I am [YHVH your God]" -- "two things have I heard": from "I am", "you shall have no [other gods]" is necessarily understood. "That might belongs to God" means that the entire Torah, which belongs to

the Blessed Holy One, certainly was understood as in the case of our ancestor Abraham, peace be upon him. "And faithfulness (hesed) is yours, O Lord, for you reward each one according to his deeds" [ibid.]: in other words, the reason that the Blessed Holy One spoke many words was on account of His great love (hesed), "for you reward each one," as the Tanna said, "to exact punishment [from the wicked] . . . and to give a rich reward [to the righteous]."49 This, then, is the sense of [the passage in Avot], "By ten utterances was the world created. . . . surely it could have been created by one utterance"; that is, as already noted, [it could have been created solely] by means of "I am," for this is the basis of creation and of bringing into existence. But this was "to exact punishment from the wicked"; for the Blessed Holy One diminished Himself from command to command in order that everyone might comprehend, but they had no desire to grasp or understand or fulfill. "They destroy the world created by ten utterances," and they are punished.⁵⁰ This was also [done] "to give a rich reward to the righteous who sustain the world": even though the Blessed Holy One limits Himself, they heed all the commands on the basis of "I am [YHVH your God]," for this is the essence of bringing about the creation of the world, which was "created by ten utterances." Understand this.

This is also the meaning of what King Solomon, peace be upon him, said in his great wisdom: "She opens her mouth in wisdom, and the teaching of love (hesed) is on her tongue" [Proverbs 31:26]. For it is clear that the ten utterances [by which the world was created] are actually the Ten Commandments.⁵¹ There are nine occurrences of "and God said," but [the word] be-reshit is likewise an utterance [Rosh ha-Shanah 32a]. So the word be-reshit is parallel to "I am [YHVH your God]," for it is the first and the foundation; and in the Targum Yerushalmi, be-reshit is rendered "in wisdom." It turns out, then, that the sphere of "I am" is the sphere of wisdom. Therefore those who have wisdom have been able to grasp all of the Torah from ["I am"]. Understand, for this is a general principle, basic to them all, and they are attached to it.⁵² Thus "she opens her mouth in wisdom" refers to the Torah, whose opening is in wisdom, the sphere of "I am." And "the teaching of hesed" is all the rest of the Torah; it is hesed, because the Blessed Holy One wanted to favor Israel so that everyone would comprehend this, to which end He multiplied Torah and mizvot for them [Mishnah Makkot 3:16]. This, then, is the meaning of "upon her tongue": that is, the words of Torah are "like human language."⁵³ Understand this.

Now we come to explaining a section from the Haggadah which every Jew says, inspired, surely, by the holy spirit: the question of the wise [child] and its answer, and the difference between the words of the wise and those of the contemptuous [children]. For the wise one says, "What are the precepts, regulations, and ordinances which God has commanded you?" The answer given to him is: "in accord with all the laws of Passover," etc. But the contemptuous one says, "What is this service to you?" The answer to him is to "set his teeth on edge."⁵⁴ In this there are profound things, which we will explain with the greatest brevity, and one who is wise will understand. The sentence "the Torah speaks of four types of children" will also become clear.

We have already explained above that one prohibition ["You shall have no other gods"], and one precept, "I am", is enough for the wise. Our ancestor Abraham, may he rest in peace, grasped all of the Torah on his own, because he rejected and broke the power of "other gods" by himself; and with the removal of "other gods", he attained "I am [YHVH your God]." He then understood the creation of humankind with the 248 positive miẓvot and the 365 prohibitions, and how they give a person light and life, as is made clear in Sefer Yezirah [6:7]: "When our ancestor Abraham, may he rest in peace, came, he understood and looked . . . he saw and succeeded at creation, as it is said [Genesis 12:5], 'and the

bodies they had made in Haran'. . . . He connected the 22 letters [of the Torah] to his tongue."⁵⁵

Now in the Talmud, it says, "In the time to come, the mizvot will be void" [Niddah 61b]. This is amazing! Indeed, the Torah is eternal, and every single mizvah is the vitality of the universe, as is made clear in a number of places. What does negation have to do with them? But to understand this, since we are engaged in that very matter, and in that law -- "[Let them attend to] the laws of a festival on that festival" [Sanhedrin 101a] -- let us explain that in the Ra'aya Mehheimna [Zohar 3:251b], it says that mazzah is an expression for quarrelling and strife: that is, one engages in strife and repels the shells.⁵⁶ Mazzah is also YH concealed by means of atbash in m-z; and when the Blessed Holy One is present, it is called mazzah.⁵⁷ Look there. To clarify this, it is known that the letters of mizvah spell the Divine name, YHVH, may He be blessed; though the letters YH are hidden in the letters mem - zadi and are parallel to the divine intelligences which are now concealed. But in the time to come, when the divine intelligences and the attribute of knowledge (da'at) will be revealed, mazzah will be on the level of mizvah; for the Name of the Blessed Holy One will be [revealed], and there will be connection and coupling, and mizvah will be like YHVH, blessed be He, for the three divine intelligences will be revealed.⁵⁸ This is the sense of "they are two which are four, and will be three": YHVH, the root

of wisdom, understanding and knowledge.⁵⁹ In my humble opinion, it is intimated several times in the holy Zohar and the Ra'aya Meheimna,⁶⁰ that at first Israel ascended to the rung of mazzah, and afterwards to the rung of bread. "I will rain down bread for you from heaven" [Exodus 16:4]-- "Heaven" is the Vav, and "bread" is the three essences; and know that these are the three divine intelligences.⁶¹ This is the meaning of the Talmud's statement [Shabbat 30b], that in the time to come the land of Israel will produce cakes: in the time to come the covering will be removed from the divine intelligences, and all will be YHVV, blessed be He, and the land of Israel will produce bread with neither chaff nor stubble. As with the earth, what is sown is that which is produced; if fine wheat, fine wheat will be brought forth. The same [applies] in reverse, God forbid, and so it is in regard to everything in the world. In the time to come the intercourse of a husband and wife will bring forth souls without chaff and stubble, according to the union. Therefore, there will be nullification of the evil urge, and the abolition of death, as it is said "He will swallow death forever" [Isaiah 25:8]. For everything will stand in the revelation of the supernal intelligences, which are life. One who is enlightened will understand. This is the meaning of the hint in the Talmud, "In the time to come, the mizvot will be void": the word mizvah will be unused; instead, it will be called by the name YHVV, may He be blessed, for the

light of the divine intelligences concealed in the mazzah of mizvah will be revealed.⁶²

From my master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come -- either in his name or in the name of Nahmanides -- I heard that the world will comprehend the sphere of the mizvah and the root of the vitality of the mizvah: how it is actually the life-force of one's soul and the life of the universe. As it is said, "As surely as I have established My covenant with day and night -- the laws of heaven and earth" [Jeremiah 33:25]: "My covenant" is the Torah. As our ancestor Abraham, peace be upon him, grasped all of the Torah on his own, as already mentioned -- not that he kept the Torah because the Blessed Holy One had commanded him to do so (for the Torah did not yet exist), but that he comprehended by his intellect the root of the vitality of every single mizvah, how it was the life of his being and had to be performed to enliven his soul, so that he could cleave to the Life of life -- so in the time to come "the earth shall be filled with knowledge (de'ah) . . . as water covers the sea" [Isaiah 11:9]. This is also the sense of "Your eyes shall see your Teacher" [Isaiah 30:20]: the letters of Rabbi stand for wisdom and understanding, with the flow, as is explained above in the name of my master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come.⁶³ Thus, "your Teacher will no longer be hidden" [ibid.] means that the rung

of Rabbi, which is wisdom and understanding, will not be hidden in the letters mem-zadi, which is concealment, but rather, all will be revealed. Like our ancestor Abraham, may he rest in peace, all will understand the paths of life, the root of each mizvah and its secrets: how they illuminate humanity and all the worlds and give them life. [In fact,] it is absolutely impossible for a human being to become whole except by means of [the mizvot]. The two explanations match for one who understands.⁶⁴

This is the explanation of mizvot: the name mizvot, which expresses commanding, will be void in the time to come, for the mizvot will not be done because they are commanded by God, may He be blessed, and had He not commanded, one would not fulfill. But people will naturally be eager to observe the mizvot in order to enliven their souls, just as, without any commandment, they pursue that which gives them life in the physical realm. Therefore the name mizvah will be void, for [the mizvah] will no longer be named using an expression of command; instead, people will do them out of intelligence and their own comprehension, as already noted. There is enough in this comment for one who is enlightened to understand the root of things and how the two explanations fit together.

Thus the author of the Haggadah states, "Blessed be God. . . . The Torah speaks of four types of children: one who is wise [one who is contemptuous, one who is simple, and

one who does not know how to ask.] The wise one says, 'What are the precepts, regulations, and ordinances which God has commanded you?'" "The one who is wise has eyes in his head," (rosho),⁶⁵ for he possesses wisdom, which is be-reshit, the first utterance [of creation], parallel to [the first word] "I am." Out of this power he grasps by himself the entire Torah, in which are comprised 611 urgings to "I am," as has been said. Understand this. Therefore, for one who is wise it will not be called by the name "law" nor by the name mizvah. Rather it will be called, as in the first explanation, by the name YHVH, blessed be He, or, as in the second interpretation, the way of command will not exist, but they will actually pursue this, once the light of wisdom, the root of the vitality of the universe, is revealed. This accounts for the surprise of the one who is wise: "What are the laws . . . which God has commanded you?" If you had not been commanded, would you not do them? Does not anyone with a brain in his head know that this, in reality, is the life-force of both whole and particular? For him the answer is "according to the laws of Passover": that is, that as there are divine intelligences in smallness and divine intelligences in greatness, so also are there people like them; and it is necessary to combine the two of them together and to sweeten them, as mentioned in the long previous exposition.⁶⁶ This will be the case until our true Messiah comes, may it be speedily and soon. Amen.

This is indicated [in the statement], "One must not have the afikoman brought to the table after the passover."⁶⁷ The final letters [of the last three words] spell Haran, which [in gematria] is three times 'elohim, signifying the divine intelligences in smallness, as is known.⁶⁸ Therefore, the Ten Commandments and the ten utterances were necessary.⁶⁹ And "one must not have [the afikoman] brought to the table after the passover" means that now there is no complete redemption with revelation of the divine intelligences, for "after passover" there is still the time of counting [the Omer], as is known from the writings.⁷⁰ Understand this.

But the question of the contemptuous [child] is the complete opposite. For this wicked one does not at all grasp the delightful sweetness of the Torah and the mizvah, but it [appears to him] to be hard labor for all who engage in it, and like a heavy burden, more than he can bear⁷¹ -- any mizvah which he does, he does against his will. He therefore asks the King's servants, "What is this work that he commands his servants to do? Or is not a command of the King at all?" This is the meaning of "[What is this service] to you?"; like the words of the snake mentioned above. This is the meaning of [the Haggadah's teaching]: "As he excluded himself from the community . . . he became a heretic," which should be understood.⁷² "But refute him and say to him, 'It is because of what God did for me'. . . 'for me', not 'for him': if he had been there, he would not have been redeemed." For the

redemption was only for those who believed in Him, may He be blessed. As it is written in 'Or ha-Hayyim [on Exodus 12:12]: "'I will go through the land of Egypt [on that night and smite every firstborn],' like a king who goes from place to place."⁷³ It is analogous to children of a king who were in hard captivity, hoping daily to go to their father and king. Once, the king passed by the very place where his children were, and as the king was going by, his children recognized their father the king and held on to him and to his clothing. Who will put out his hand to remove them from their father? [Only] one who would be sentenced to death. Yet out of terror of the king, he fears to exert himself near [the king] at all.⁷⁴ And this is the meaning of "like a king who goes from place to place." Understand this. But as for the wicked one who does not believe in this, it is as stated in the holy books of the learned one of Polnoyye in the name of the rabbi, the preacher of Baer, may his memory be a blessing, [on] "there is no cure of his affliction for one who spurns the wise" [Shabbat 119b]: Because he does not believe in him and takes no heed as the zaddik passes through Gehenna to cling to him, because he did not believe in him while he was still alive, therefore he does not ascend with him.⁷⁵ This is exactly the case concerning this contemptuous one who questions God and his servants, denying the foundation and not believing in Him. Therefore, "if he had been there, he would not have been redeemed," for [then] all the

sparks of the Shekhinah ascended, but terror and fear fell upon the shells and they were like stone.⁷⁶

Now the simple one, who does not comprehend the truth of the Torah, but proceeds simply and believes more and more in God and his servants, asks, "What is this?" As for the one who does not know how to ask, one must tell him, and open for him the portals of faith in the Torah and in the mizvah. These four children, though one is wicked, are considered to be like the four types among those who give charity [Mishnah Avot 5:16], though one of them wishes "neither to give, nor that others give,"⁷⁷ as is made clear in the name of my master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come.

This explains "The Torah speaks of (ke-neged) four types of children": in other words, the Torah uses many utterances as opposed to the one who is wise, who grasps the whole Torah through wisdom, as previously noted. His question [seeks] to return the world to the right way and to cause its inhabitants to understand the root of knowledge and of wisdom. In a loud voice he yells, "Sleepers, awake from your slumber, for the Torah and the mizvot are nothing other than YHVH, the living God! This sphere of mizvah is nothing but YHVH, blessed be He and blessed be His name!" He breaks the teeth of the wicked, meaning that in his great wisdom he shatters the wisdom of the liars and heretics.⁷⁸ This is the meaning of "You break the teeth of the wicked. Deliverance

is the Lord's; your blessing be upon your people! Selah" [Psalm 3:8-9]. And this is in order "that the righteous be richly rewarded, for they sustain the world created by ten utterances" [Avot 5:1]. "The Torah speaks of four types of children": "the Torah speaks the language of humanity" [Berakhot 31b], to cause them to understand, as mentioned. Understand this.⁷⁹

I gave this sermon on Shabbat ha-Gadol in the holy community of Sudilkov in 542 by the abbreviated reckoning (1782).⁸⁰

One could also make the following interpretation: **This (zo't) is the law of the burnt offering** means, Let all the ascents and prayers which you raise up be only for the sake of zo't [the Shekhinah].⁸¹ **It is that which goes up (hi' ha-'olah) from where it is burned on the altar all night,** meaning, know that she herself is "that which goes up" (ha 'olah) and that she is the one who gives you thought, and words to say and to unify. **From where it is burned** [is said] because she is "lovesick" [Song of Songs 2:5]; it burns in her like fire **on the altar**, for she suffers with Israel all the pain and torments, which are like an **altar** of atonement **all night**, the entire duration of the bitter and impetuous

exile. Therefore she is lovesick to unite with her husband and recalls how long the exile will continue: **until morning** -- until the Morning of Israel comes to give them light. But if you were to say that she longs to unite herself, but He, as if it were possible, does not desire to do so, it is said, **the fire of⁸² the altar** -- of the afflictions which we suffer, and our Mother along with us -- **shall be kept burning on it (bo)**, [in other words,] in Him (**bo**), within the Blessed Holy One. Thus **the priest shall dress in his linen raiment** refers to the Israelite who serves in the mystery of a **priest**, a person of hesed, one who acts in love toward his Creator.⁸³ Understand this.

**The priest who offers a man's burnt offering
shall keep the skin of the burnt offering
that he [the man] offered the priest.**

(Leviticus 7:8)

There is a difficulty, for the text should have read: **shall keep that [which] he [the man] offered ('asher hikriv la-kohen lo yihyeh)**. [Why repeat the priest?] But it appears to me that thoughts have a garment: just as Torah requires a garment so that it might be uncovered and enlarged in clarification, so thoughts have garments.⁸⁴ And I heard from my master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, that an individual's thought is a complete entity.⁸⁵ This, then, is the sense of **the priest who offers (ha-makriv) a man's burnt offering--**

the offering is the thought, as is known.⁸⁶ In other words, a zaddik brings his thought close (mekarev) to the Blessed Holy One, as well as the thoughts of others who are attached to him. When he speaks awe-inspiring words of correction to them, and they listen to him and return and consider and repent, then his thought comes close to the Blessed Holy One; it emerges from its former garments, strange thoughts, and is raised up to good thoughts. This is **the skin of the burnt offering**: the garments of strange thoughts which he had at first, he offered to the priest, who is the Blessed Holy One, as is said in 'Or ha-Hayyim and the holy Zohar.⁸⁷ Then "it will be his" (lo yihyeh), meaning a great light is increased for the zaddik because he draws the hearts and thoughts of Israel near the Blessed Holy One. For this reason in the torah of R. Meir, "garments of light" is written, with an alef ('or [light] for 'or [skin]), because His Torah is all light.⁸⁸

"Esther put on malkhut (royal apparel)" [Esther 5:1], should also be understood in this way. For I heard from my master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, referring to "I will surely hide My face" [Deuteronomy 31:18], that when a person does not know that there is concealment, it is certainly not good. He thinks he is a perfect zaddik and does not return in teshuvah. However, when one knows that [God] is hidden and feels [it] in his soul, then he is humbled before God, may He

be blessed, and makes entreaty before Him. Thus "I will surely hide" (haster 'astir) means, I will hide [My] concealment (hastarah), and it will not be known that it is concealment.⁸⁹ And this is the meaning of "On the third day" [Esther 5:1]: she connected herself in love to the third day, which is Jacob, the quality of truth -- and she knew that there was concealment, "and Esther put on malkhut." Similarly, "Mordecai left [the king's presence] in robes of malkhut" [Esther 8:15].⁹⁰ Understand.

As for the flesh, any one that is clean may eat such flesh . . . But flesh that touches anything unclean [shall not be eaten; it shall be burnt with fire].

(Leviticus 7:19)

One should explain this as a hint, for it is known what is written in the holy Zohar [2:87a] concerning "You shall not make for yourself a graven image" [Exodus 20:4]: namely, that one should not speak -- God forbid! -- Torah that he did not receive from his teachers or that he did not receive from a worthy master. Look there. Behold, there is Torah which needs to be hidden away, which it is forbidden to enjoy, and there is [Torah] which is subject to being burned;⁹¹ one who is enlightened will understand.

Now Torah is given the name **flesh**; as flesh came down to Israel from heaven, so likewise, the holy Torah came down

to Israel from heaven.⁹² Thus the word **flesh** alludes to Torah, [and the phrase] **that touches anything unclean**, to [Torah] that one has not received from a respectable teacher. It is in the category of **unclean**: there is that which **shall not be eaten**, that is, that of which it is forbidden to eat, which implies that it should be stored away; and there is that which **shall be burnt with fire**, as has been said. However, as for the **flesh**, any one that is **clean** refers to Torah that one has received from a worthy teacher, one who is clean and upright. In this case, any one that is **clean**-- that is, one who purifies oneself beforehand -- afterwards **may eat** and enjoy **the flesh**, that is, such Torah.⁹³ The enlightened will understand.

BALAK

"Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not do anything, small or great, contrary to the mouth of YHVH."

(Numbers 22:18)

One should comment on the superfluous addition to this verse of the words **or great**, which obviously could be understood by implication.¹ In my humble opinion, this should be explained according to the hint in [2 Samuel 23:3] "a zaddik rules [in] the awe of God": the Blessed Holy One decrees and a zaddik rescinds the decree [Mo'ed Katan 16b].² It is necessary to understand this. Is a zaddik the prosecutor of the Blessed Holy One, God forbid? Rather, there are two he's in the divine name. The first he is called great and is the world of freedom and of thought; there forces of judgment are aroused and therefore sweetened in their root.³ The final he is called small, and is malkhut, where the revelation of the forces of judgment occurs out of the mouth -- as is explained in the Tikkunim [Hakdamah, 17a]: malkhut is mouth. This is [the world of] speech revealing thought.⁴ And when the words are returned to the world of thought, the powers of judgment are sweetened in their root, in Binah, as

is known.⁵ The zaddik proceeds in this way to revoke a certain decision; for a zaddik ascends in his thought, through devekut, to the world of thought and sweetens the words at their root and therefore the decree is annulled. Know that this is what is meant by **small and great**.⁶ However, that evil one [Balaam] said, **I could not do anything, small or great, contrary to the mouth of YHVH**. "From the utterance of the [Divine] word" you learn, in the light of Torah, to comprehend [how] to nullify and sweeten the forces of judgment in their root.⁷ Understand this, for I have been brief.

One can also explain this verse according to its plain meaning: **"I could not do anything, small or great"**: one who is on the level of smallness and lowliness, according to the word of God, **I cannot** change or lift up. And similarly, one who is on the level of greatness and expansion, in accord with God's word, **I cannot** make small. Thus, I can do nothing to Israel, who are on the rung of greatness, according to the word of God, blessed be He. But they did not discern this [meaning] in his words, grasping their simple sense. Therefore "Again Balak sent other dignitaries, more numerous [and distinguished] than these" [Numbers 22:15].⁸

Further, the Lord, blessed be He, might be hinting to us, through these words of Balaam written in our holy Torah, that the Torah is surprised and says **I cannot go beyond** (la'avor) **the mouth of God!** -- that is, to speak the words of God, blessed be He, from his holy letters, merely transmitting (ha'avarah) them without any feeling of the heart. **I am not able:** it is impossible to contain this, [merely] to transmit the words of God's mouth.⁹ Understand this.

"[Balaam] said to Balak, 'Stay here beside your offerings while I seek a meeting yonder.' YHVH met Balaam and put a word in his mouth, saying 'Return to Balak and speak thus.'"

(Numbers. 23:15-16)

We should comment on why, in the first occurrence [of this dialogue, v. 3], it does not say **while I seek a meeting yonder** (ve'anokhi 'ikkareh koh), but [does say] **speak thus** (koh).¹⁰ In my humble opinion, this should be explained; but first let us understand why God, may He be blessed, brought this about. It was not that Israel had need of Balaam's blessings, but that God's intention, in His great love for His treasured people, was that just as He is Without End ('en sof), may He be blessed and exalted, so there would be no end to the blessings of Israel; they would be blessed in all the

worlds, in those above and those below and even from the shells.¹¹ The angel of evil will be compelled to answer 'Amen,'¹² because we are bound and fastened to His great name, may He be blessed, and take His unity upon us evening and morning, every day, in [reciting] the verse "Hear, O Israel," the twenty-five letters of unification.¹³ Some in Israel sacrifice themselves, in body and in soul, for the sanctification of the Name, may He be blessed, and many set aside their carnal desire, all because they accept His unity.¹⁴

There are a number of meanings and proofs and modes [of explaining] the meaning of "one," and one of them is numbering: everything comes after one and returns to one, for example, 1, [2,] and so one until 10, then 100, 1000, 10,000. All is counted using one: one hundred, one ten, etc.; it turns out that everything comes back to one. Therefore, God, blessed be He, also unites Israel in one; as stated [in Berakhot 6a]: on the Blessed Holy One's tefillin is written, "Who is like your people Israel, a nation singular on the earth" [1 Chronicles 17:21].¹⁵ This is also the sense of the holy Zohar [2:135a], "bringing about [the union] of one with one, the fulfillment of the mystery of 'God will be one and His name one.' [Zechariah 14:19]"¹⁶ In other words, the living souls (nefashot) of Israel are His name, may He be blessed, as it is written: "a living creature is His name" [Genesis 2:19].¹⁷

This is the reason that, the first time, God said to Balaam, "Return to Balak and speak thus (koh)": that is, both of you also have to acknowledge their blessing, because they constantly accept My unity through the twenty-five (k-h) letters of unification. Therefore, "Thus (koh) shall you bless the people of Israel" [Numbers 6:23]. Balaam had been thinking that Israel only had a hold on this level of koh and that they performed their actions from this level, like the rest of the nations of the world, which act from that aspect on which they have a hold. In his mind, he conceived that he would perform an action so that they would have no connection with koh, and be separated from "thus shall you bless." Therefore he said to Balak, **Stay here (koh)**, that is, you stand koh, **beside your offerings while I seek a meeting yonder (koh)**. As Rashi explained, [the verb 'ikkareh, I seek a meeting] is in the 'itpa'el [conjugation]. In other words, I will perform an action (pe'ulah) so that they will have no grasp on koh, but will be separated from koh.¹⁸ As in Rashi's interpretation, he said to God, may He be blessed, "Their ancestors built seven altars before you, and I have set up [seven] corresponding to them all." Thus, **YHVH met Balaam and put something (davar) in his mouth:** following Rashi's explanation, He put a bridle and a bit in his mouth, **saying, 'Return to Balak,'** that is, you can do nothing other than return to Balak.¹⁹ **And speak thus (koh):** that is, the attribute koh itself, which is the

Shekhinah, as it were, will speak against your will, even though you will not want to say those words.²⁰ For the truth is not, as you think, that they have only a single hold there, like the rest of the nations. Rather God, blessed be He, has separated and set apart the people of Israel from all the nations to be his treasured people, whom he chose to cleave to him one to one, completely one; as the holy Zohar says, the Blessed Holy One and Israel are completely one.²¹

Therefore, [Balaam] spoke and said [Numbers 23:21], "No harm is in sight for Jacob . . . YHVH their God is with them, and their King's acclaim is in their midst," that is, really within them. As Rashi explains, "acclaim (teru'ah) is an expression of companionship (re'ut)"; and the Targum to this phrase reads, "the presence (Shekhinah) of their King is among them." In other words, it is all actually one, and they are the children of the Blessed Holy One, whose innards are actually stirred for them.²²

Therefore, **in his mouth** He had placed koh, the Shekhinah, as if it were possible, which is the source of blessings, as it is said: "Thus (koh) shall you bless" [Numbers 6:23]. [Shekhinah] is the mouth and speech of all the worlds, and by means of koh, will they be blessed, against [Balaam's] will. And, against his will, the angel of evil will answer, "Amen!" Understand this.

As I see them from the top of the rocks, [and gaze on them from the heights,] here is a people that dwells apart, not reckoned among the nations.

(Numbers 23:9)

In my humble opinion, one should explain this using the mode of allusion. But first it is necessary for you to know that the troubles which Israel has in exile -- may the Merciful One save us! -- are due to the fact that they are mixed in among the nations and have learned their practices. The attribute of judgment makes accusation: "How are they different from one another?" Similarly, Isaiah, may he rest in peace, said [Isaiah 27:4], "There is no anger in Me" to exert strength against the attribute of judgment, God forbid.²³

It is this which the text, **As I see them from the top (me-rosh) of the rocks** implies. **The rocks** suggests the patriarchs, the leaders (rashei) of Israel called by the name fathers, as [in 2 Kings 2:12]: "My father, my father! Israel's chariots" etc. It also suggests mothers, because they supply Torah and awe to Israel like a mother who gives a baby milk from her breasts. They **dwelt apart**: they remain alone in the innermost chambers of their dwelling places and in their hearts. **And they are not reckoned among the nations**: they do not intermingle to learn their ways. Therefore the attribute of judgment cannot bring charges against them, for **from the top I see them**, that is, from the

leaders of the generation who do not learn the practices of **the nations**.²⁴ And they (hem) are one **people**, as hen in the Greek language means "one,"²⁵ and are interconnected with the zaddikim of the generation.

In a lighter vein,²⁶ one should also explain this following what I heard in the name of my master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come: Once he went to the mikveh (ritual bath) among Ishmaelites, and on his return, he feared that Ishmael might touch him. But he heard two Ishmaelites talking with one another, and the one [said] to his friend, "Be careful that you do not touch this impure Jew, God forbid!"²⁷ This is what is said, **Here is a people that dwells apart**, and are not mixed with the impure goyim. This is because they are **not reckoned among the nations** (goyim); [that is,] among the goyim they are not important and this is for their benefit, as already mentioned. This is easy to understand.

One can find another implication in light of the saying: the Blessed Holy One and Israel are one. For God is one, and Israel is also one -- as it is said: "Who is like your people Israel, a nation singular on the earth" [1 Chronicles 17:21] -- and it is fitting for one to cleave to one.²⁸ It is also known that the whole world was created solely for

the sake of Israel.²⁹ The Blessed Holy One created Israel, and He created the nations; and the seven peoples are the root of all seventy of the nations.³⁰ This is the sense of the verse: "[You are the God who chose Abraham . . .] making the covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites [the Hittites, etc. . . . to his descendants]" [Nehemiah 9:8]: all the nations will automatically be given into their hands, and this both in the physical and the spiritual realms.³¹ That is, when Israel, God forbid, does not do God's will, they [the nations] oppress Israel both in the business of making a living and with other troubles. And in the spiritual realm, this refers to strange thoughts from the side of the seven peoples, which are the evil portion of the seven days of construction;³² one falls among them, and they confound Israel in their service and their study of Torah. However, when Israel cleave to God, then they enter into the mystery of One and escape the control of the seven peoples; and all their troubles, both material and spiritual, cease of themselves.

Thus should one explain the hint in the Gemara [Mishnah Kinnim 3:6], that when [a beast] is alive its voice is one, but when it is dead, its sound is seven: When one is on the level of living and attached to the Life of life, then his voice is one. That is, in every expression that one brings forth, either from his mouth or by means of his hands, or in any thing, the intention in it is one, in attachment to

the one God, for they constantly cleave to God and "one is joined to the other" [Job 41:8]. But when one is "dead," that is, when one falls from his level, then his voice is seven: as already mentioned, his thought is sundered into the sphere of the seven peoples, to some aspect of the evil in the seven days of construction, and strange thoughts come and disturb him from his service. It should be explained that this is what [this verse] hints. **Here is a people that dwells apart:** when they are on a solitary level of unity and attachment to the one God, then they are separated from the seven peoples, and therefore, they are **not reckoned among the nations**. That is, the strange thoughts which come from the sphere of the seven peoples are removed from them; instead, they attach themselves to the One, with no diversion or strange thought, as has already been said. And automatically, in the physical realm as well, all the shells are subject to their power,³³ and "all evildoers are scattered" (Psalm 92:10).

This passage makes a further allusion along the lines of what has already been mentioned, and in light of the verse, "YHVH alone did guide him, no alien god at his side" [Deuteronomy 32:12]. One should note the hint in the word "alone," badad, that is, the two dalets. For the Infinite ('ein sof) is called dalet because it is impossible to grasp; and malkhut, which is the Shekhinah, is also called dalet,

since "she has nothing at all of her own."³⁴ This is the meaning of "YHVH alone did guide him": When they come to the level "alone", that is, when all their actions are solely to unite the Blessed Holy One and His Shekhinah, who are the two dalets already noted,³⁵ then "no alien god is at his side," that is, no strange thought, God forbid, for all the shells are abolished from him. This same explanation should also apply to **Here is a people that dwells apart** (le-vadaḏ): as said above, all that they do is [intended] solely to unite the two dalets; and through this they bring upon themselves the presence of the Blessed Holy One and his Shekhinah, for they become a dwelling place (mishkan) for the Shekhinah, as it were. This is the sense of **dwells** (yishkon) **apart**.³⁶ Then, they are **not reckoned among the nations**: that is, among them the shells are abolished, and the strange thoughts as well. Understand this.

The text contains yet another hint along the lines of that which I have already said on the midrash to the verse "Jacob was left alone" [Genesis 32:25]: this relates to what we read [in Isaiah 2:11]: "YHVH alone will be exalted on that day." Look there;³⁷ it is amazing. But in the poverty of my knowledge I spoke about this in accordance with the Gemara

[Sanhedrin 37a]: "Each person must say, 'The whole world was created only for my sake.'"38

When we pay attention to the words of this Gemara, it [offers] profound and sweeping advice concerning the service of the Creator, may He be blessed. Namely, when one conceives that all the world was created only for his sake, one finds that he is the only one in the world, that all the world is incidental to him, and that upon him depends all building of the foundation of the world.³⁹ With the improvement of his actions he maintains the world, and by the reverse, the contrary. Moreover, in his service he definitely does not have any interest from any aspect of the seven attributes mentioned previously, since he does not have to do [anything] for anyone's sake, because he is the essential one, and all are subsidiary to him.⁴⁰ And surely, when God, may He be blessed, grants one the merit to come to this level, all the shells pass away from him and are subject to the power of holiness and of the Shekhinah, as it were, and God's divinity is revealed, as is His unity, may His name be blessed, for He is alone, there is none other than He. In this manner one should explain the hint in the midrash mentioned above. "Jacob was left alone": that is, when God aids one so that one reaches the level of being "alone," the only one in the world, as already noted, then he is attached to God, one to one, and "YHVH alone will be exalted," for all

the shells are annihilated, and it is apparent and revealed that YHVH alone is King over all the earth.⁴¹

This should also be the interpretation of the hint here. **Here is a people that shall dwell alone:**⁴² in other words, there will be a time when the people Israel will reach the rung **alone** -- they alone in the world and the whole world created only for their sake -- and then, [Israel] **shall not be reckoned among the nations**. That is, [Israel] will not have a single thought disturbing [them] from divine service, but will be able to be attached to the Blessed Holy One, one to one.⁴³ And then "God will be one and his name one" [Zech-ariah 14:20]. Amen.

"No one has beheld (hibbit) iniquity in Jacob, nor has anyone seen (ra'ah) mischief in Israel."

(Numbers 23:21)

Know that looking, habbatah, is from above to below -- in the words of our Sages, may their memory be a blessing, "Can anyone look from below to above? But it teaches" [Bereshit Rabba 44:12]. Seeing, like its plain meaning, is from below to above, or within, as in: "Look (habbet) toward heaven" [Genesis 15:5] and see.⁴⁴ Know also that **iniquity** is actual in practice, whereas **mischief** is a thought of

iniquity, as in the verse "He conceives mischief [and gives birth to fraud]" [Psalm 7:15]. Thus with **iniquity** the text uses "looking," for as far as the actual committing of sins, they rise up, God forbid, above the individual. But as for the thought, it does not become so prominent, but all the same it is watched and seen, and therefore seeing is mentioned along with **mischief**. This, then, is the sense of **No one has beheld iniquity in Jacob**, that is, among the common people who commit sins in actuality, which are higher than they, as it is written, "My iniquities have gone over my head" [Psalm 38:5]: God does not behold this [iniquity] in them. **And no one has seen mischief in Israel**, for they are the people of form who keep themselves from actual sin, but who sometimes fall into thoughts of iniquity.⁴⁵ Even though these two aspects are found among them, God does not examine this to distress them. The reason: **YHVH their God is with them** -- this is the Blessed Holy One--and **their King's acclaim is in their midst** -- the Shekhinah is also joined with them, as if it were possible. "In all their troubles He was troubled" [Isaiah 63:9]; therefore, He does not trouble.⁴⁶ Understand this.

But in this there is, further, an esoteric meaning, following what has already been mentioned, and that which my master my

grandfather said, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, on the verse "Happy the person (adam) whom YHVH does not hold guilty" [Psalm 32:2]: Adam is a great level, putting "I keep YHVH always before me" [Psalm 16:8] into effect. When on occasion his thought is deflected for one moment from God, may He be blessed, then for him it is considered a sin, for he has turned his thought from the awe of God; as Rashi explained "I keep YHVH always before me": I always place His fear before my face.⁴⁷ And as is made clear at the beginning of the Shulhan 'Arukh 'Orah Hayyim [1], "'I keep YHVH always before me'" is a great principle of the Torah [and among the virtues of the zaddikim . . .], "and surely, "the Blessed Holy One, [whose] glory fills the whole earth, stands over him and sees" him, and "awe and submission immediately come upon him."⁴⁸ Look there. Using this, I have explained the passage "Isaac had just come back from Be'er la-hai ro'i": Isaac, the attribute of awe, came back from Be'er (the well), that is, from that flow which gushes forth continually in his thought. La-hai ro'i means that the Life (hei) of the universe sees (ro'eh) him and looks upon all his actions, as mentioned above. In addition, awe, yir'ah, has the same letters as seeing, re-'iyah: from seeing the wonders of the Creator, blessed be He, awe comes upon him, as well as shame before God.⁴⁹

Now there are two aspects of looking which lead to fear of God. The first is that in which one sees in his mind

the grandeur of the Creator, blessed be He, beginning with the lowly world and going upward. As the Sages said [Hagigah 13a], the [distance from the earth to] the firmament is a journey of 500 years, and likewise between one firmament and another. [Above them are the holy hayyot]: . . . the ankles of the hayyot are equal to all of them. . . . And all of them were created only for His glory, may He be blessed; and they all tremble and are afraid before him.⁵⁰ From this the awe of the exaltedness of the Infinite, may He be blessed, comes upon one. The other aspect of looking is that in which one sees all the creatures of the lower world, from a mouse to a lion to a human being, fearing one another, due to the extension of awe from above below, for "His reign rules over all" [Psalm 103:19]; as my master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, opened the eyes of the blind [explaining] how awe and love extend without end from the Infinite.⁵¹ From this, also, one receives the awe of exaltedness, inner awe.

The first sphere of awe is called seeing from below, above; and the second is called looking from above, below. Any person can look into this second sphere of awe with his physical eyes. But the first aspect of awe, which involves perception with the eyes of the mind, is not gained by everyone but only by one in whose hands the purpose of God succeeds [cf. Isaiah 53:10], one who studies and understands and grasps the hidden and concealed things. In this manner

one should interpret the hint, **No one has beheld iniquity in Jacob:** they have seen how great is Israel's strength, that [these] two levels are in them. **No one has beheld** refers to the second level of awe; it is considered **iniquity** for him, [that is,] for them who are in the rank of "Jacob," the mass of the people. **Nor has anyone seen** suggests the first sphere of awe; when one has not seen **mischief**, he is among those who are in the rank of "Israel," continually paying attention to the first level of awe mentioned above. But when any stop looking for one moment, each according to his degree, for them it is considered **mischief**.⁵² By what means do they attain this level of awe? The text explains: **YHVH their God is with them and their King's acclaim is in their midst**, meaning that they put into effect "I place YHVH always before me" [Psalm 16:8]. As [he would be in fear] if a human being, of flesh and blood, stood and saw his actions, all the more so [does one feel awe when] the great King, the Blessed Holy One, whose glory fills the entire earth [Isaiah 6:3], stands and sees his deeds, as it is written in the Shulhan 'Arukh, etc. Thus **their King's acclaim is with them:** that is, the uniting [with them] of the King of the Kings of kings, the Blessed Holy One.⁵³ By such means they come to the awe of exaltedness; so that when their thought is cut off from awe for one instant, for them it is considered a sin. Understand! May God help us be among those who carry this out in

truth and wholeheartedly. May He plant his awe in our hearts. Amen.

Another explanation: **No one has beheld iniquity in Jacob, nor has anyone seen mischief in Israel; YHWH their God is with him, and the King's acclaim is within him.**⁵⁴ This can be clarified along the lines of what the holy Zohar says: The Torah, the Blessed Holy One, and Israel are all one. Following from this is a great principle: even when a person sins a great deal, he is called a spark of Israel, and there is a divine portion from above in him. He certainly will return in teshuvah, for it is impossible to be separated, for they [God and Torah] are actually inside him.⁵⁵

It should be explained that it is this which the verse implies: **No one has beheld iniquity in Jacob** -- in the lowest in Israel -- **nor, all the more so, has anyone seen mischief in Israel.** In other words, he has been helped to return in repentance. The reason: because YHWH his God is with him -- they are actually together as one. Also, the **King's acclaim is within him:** ["acclaim," teru'ah,] also spells torah + seventy ('ayin), for it is interpreted in seventy facets,⁵⁶ and it is also **within him**, actually inside him. Therefore he will not "keep his banished one an outcast" [2 Samuel 14:14]. Understand this.

**Now it is said of Jacob and of Israel: "What
has God wrought!"**

(Numbers 23:23)

This should be explained as an allusion; and let us begin by clarifying the verse, "And now, O Israel, what does YHVH your God require of you, but to revere YHVH your God" [Deuteronomy 10:12]. It is necessary to understand what the word "now" means: why at precisely that time? One should explain this in accordance with that which I heard from the late rabbi, our teacher and master, Yaakov Yosef ha-Kohen, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, who heard from my master, my grandfather, who said: At times it happens that the world stands on the upper rungs, and at times the world stands on lower levels, but now, since I am in the world, the world stands on the upper levels. Here ends the pure language of my master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come.

One should understand his pure words: when there is a zaddik and one who is wise leading the generation, and the world is attached to him, clinging to him, then all of them become wise, because the whole follows the head, the body is drawn after the head.⁵⁷ It can be compared to an individual who is intelligent and has wisdom: all his actions -- even that which he does with his hand or with the rest of his limbs -- are in wisdom, for all proceed from the intelligence. As the verse "Let your camp be holy" [Deuter-

onomy 23:15] suggests, let all the parts of your body be in wisdom, which is holiness, as is known.⁵⁸ Thus, when humanity are attached to a certain wise man or zaddik, who does everything in pure wisdom, then all follow the head and perform their actions in wisdom, as we find in the case of Antoninus, who said to Rabbi [Judah the Prince], "I know that the one who is least among you can revive the dead" [Avodah Zarah 10b]. [This was so] because they were attached to Rabbi, who was a great wise man, and everything follows the head.⁵⁹ So it is in every generation when there is a true and wise zaddik.

Now in a certain book I saw that the letters of Israel spell "I have a head" (li ro'sh). That is, they are on the level **Israel**, on the upper rungs, when they have a head and leader. **Jacob**, on the other hand, is the "heel" ('akev): when they have no head, God forbid, then the world is on lower levels. This is how one should interpret the substance of the meaning of [the Baal Shem's] holy words.

So also should one explain the verse "And now, O Israel": Moses said to them, "And now" you, at this time, are on the level "Israel" -- that is, I am your head and guide, now. "What does YHVH your God require of you, but to revere [your God]" can be understood in the manner of [Mishnah Avot 3:21]: "Without wisdom there is no awe, and without awe there is no wisdom." Now, when there is wisdom, awe is necessary, for without awe there is no wisdom at all,

and conversely, awe requires wisdom. Therefore, now, when there is wisdom, is the time requiring awe.⁶⁰ We find, in the words of the Sages [Bereshit Rabba, 77:1], that zaddikim perform the works of God: as the Blessed Holy One remembers the barren, so does Elisha; as the Blessed Holy One revives the dead, so does Elisha; and so it is in many cases. In other words, the Blessed Holy One "fulfills the will of those who fear Him" [Psalm 145:19]; and a zaddik decrees and it is established for him.⁶¹ As a matter of course, those who are attached to the zaddik can also do likewise, as mentioned previously -- "I know that the one who is least among you can revive the dead"; and the reason is that they were joined to Rabbi. In this manner one should interpret the hint in our passage. **Now**, that is, when it will be as at this time, when Israel had a leader and guide, our teacher Moses, peace be upon him, **it is said of Jacob and of Israel**. In other words, it will likewise be said of the masses, of Jacob who is attached to Israel, **"What has God wrought."** The things which God has done will be said concerning them, for they will have done so as well. As the Blessed Holy One revives the dead so will they, as the Blessed Holy One remembers the barren, so will they; for all follows the head and leader, as has already been said.⁶² Understand this.

**[The word of him . . .] who sees the vision
of the Almighty fallen down, but with eyes
unveiled.**

(Numbers 24:4)

Since the Lord, blessed be He, wrote the portion of Balaam and all his words in the Torah, and gave [it] to us as a teaching to show us the way which we should follow, in each and every utterance there are surely exalted, profound, and hidden secrets.⁶³ Here, with regard to this passage, God has brought light to our eyes, and we should explain that the zaddik, who is constantly attached in his thought to God, may He be blessed, and whose thought always flows to the source, has not the least desire to speak any word of Torah to people; for in so doing he has to fall from his thought, flowing to the source, in order to contract his thought within those words which he would speak to them. However, when he sees the name Shaddai, as it is said: He said, "Enough!" (dai): the world wanted to extend to infinity, but He set a boundary to the world, and said, "Enough." It turns out that at times there is limitation, that it is necessary to limit and diminish; and this is the will of the Creator, may He be blessed, in order to elevate the lower levels. Then he contracts his thought and speaks to humanity in order to revive the soul of the lower rungs.⁶⁴

This is what the Lord, blessed be He, has implied to us in his Holy Torah. One **who sees the vision of the Almighty** (Shaddai) refers to the zaddik: when he sees the vision of Shaddai, which is a reminder of boundary and limitation -- as already mentioned, that He said, "Enough!" -- then he falls⁶⁵ from his thought which had extended to the

Infinite.⁶⁶ He contracts his thought, **but with eyes unveiled** -- in other words, in order to open the eyes of the blind, to remove their deep darkness, to enlighten their eyes and also their hearts to God. Understand this.

How fair are your tents, O Jacob, your dwellings, O Israel!

(Numbers 24:5)

This should be interpreted as an allusion, for a tent refers to something temporary, while a dwelling is a permanent thing. This is the hint of **How fair are your tents:** even your travelling, when you are not in your house; **O Jacob** -- even though you are a lower level. And the reason: **your dwellings, O Israel.** That is, this comes about by the merit of your holy ancestors, who were a sanctuary for the Blessed Holy One, and won the dwelling of the Shekhinah.⁶⁷

I have said this for the present and its needs, and one who is enlightened will understand; further words of God are in this verse, and when God in his great love grants me the right, I will explain.

His boughs will drip with water, and his seed will have abundant water. His king shall rise above Agag, his kingdom shall be exalted.

(Numbers 24:7)

We should interpret this in accord with the saying [in Sanhedrin 97a]: "Three things come about while one's attention is diverted: the Messiah, finding something, and a scorpion." Our teacher and rabbi Samuel Edels, may his memory be a blessing, explained that if one is worthy the Messiah will come while one's attention is diverted by finding something; if one is not worthy, the Messiah will come while one's attention is diverted by a scorpion. This is puzzling.⁶⁸

But in my humble opinion we should note what the Ra'aya Meheimna [Zohar 2:120a] says on a passage in the Talmud [Rosh ha-Shanah 11a]: They are destined to be redeemed in [the month of] Nisan; others say, they are destined to be redeemed in Tishri. For if they are worthy, the redemption will be of the aspect Nisan, which is the attribute of love (hesed), for its letters are in alphabetical order, [like those of] 'aviv, which indicates hesed; but if not, the redemption will be of the aspect Tishri, which is judgment (din), and its letters backwards.⁶⁹ Look there. And in my humble opinion these are identical to the words of our teacher and rabbi Samuel Edels, may his memory be a blessing.

But understand the reason for this. If they become aroused in teshuvah from below, then it will be in hesed, in accordance with the verse: "When a woman at childbirth bears a male" [Leviticus 12:2], the aspect of love and compassion.

But in the opposite case, it will be the feminine aspect, which is judgment.⁷⁰ This is clarified in a number of places in the Talmud and the Zohar and the Prophets: that all depends on the merit of Israel, as "I will speed it in its time," and "When YHVH has carried out all his purpose on Mount Zion" [Isaiah 60:22 and 10:12].⁷¹ And it is similarly clear in the holy Zohar: if Israel had returned in teshuvah, one evil that befell them would have been enough for them.

In such a manner should we explain the hint here, in this verse. **His boughs (dalyav) will drip with water** means that the arousal of the redemption for Israel will be from Israel itself, who appears weak (dalim) -- in other words, because they will be aroused to repent, and to do good deeds. Then, **his seed will have abundant water**, that is, great forces of hesed, the male aspect, as mentioned above.⁷² **His King shall rise above Agag, his kingdom shall be exalted.** May it be God's will that it come to be, speedily and in our lifetime!

This is the general [interpretation]; but one should also explain how it applies to the individual, as received from my master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come: Each person is bound to redeem his own soul, in accordance with the verse "Come near to my soul and redeem her" [Psalm 69:19]. This also accords with what has already been mentioned. **His boughs will drip with water** -- these are the female waters. Then **his seed**

will have abundant water; for male waters are called by the name **seed**, and female waters by the name **water**.⁷³ Understand. **His king shall rise above Agag, his kingdom shall be exalted** speedily and in our lifetime! Amen. Selah.

[When Pinhas . . . saw this, he left the assembly,] and took a spear in his hand.

(Numbers 25:7)

The holy Zohar says that Pinhas saw the mem flying in the air, and he joined resh and het, and also vav, to it, and a spear (romah) was formed [3:237b, Ra'aya Meheimna].⁷⁴ Let us clarify this according to my [own] little intellect, for about this matter I heard from my master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, that he [Pinhas] saw and knew that malkhut [Shekhinah] was without unification. He understood this from himself, for the individual is a world in miniature;⁷⁵ and he created unity, etc. To explain this with the utmost brevity: he knew this from the thoughts of hesed which fell,⁷⁶ and he became strong like a lion, in the manner of [Mishnah Avot 4:1]: "Who is mighty? One who subdues his evil impulse." This is the quality of power (gevurah), the attribute of Isaac, which equals 208 (resh - het).⁷⁷ Then the sparks of hesed arose from their breaking and from their fall; the aspect hesed was revealed by means of the vav, and

spear (romah) was brought about, the numerical equivalent of Abraham, hesed.⁷⁸

It is likewise with every manifestation of judgment, may the Merciful One save us: it exists because malkhut is without unification; but when one brings forth the aspect of hesed in judgment, then the judgment is sweetened at its root and becomes the aspect of Abraham. The good rises and the evil falls.⁷⁹ The incident involving Nahum of Gamzu, was similar [Ta'anit 21a]: he said, "This also [gam zu] is for the good," and found the aspect of hesed that was in it; and it was sweetened, and was turned into hesed. This is the reason that Elijah said, in the incident that occurred there, "It is of the dust of Abraham," that is, the aspect Abraham, which is hesed. Thus he rose and they fell and were crushed.⁸⁰

This is enough for one who understands, for one could make a lengthy explanation, but one who is enlightened will understand, following the words of my master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, that the resh is wisdom, and the root of wisdom is power. Understand this.

Va-Ethannan

I pleaded with YHVH at that time, saying, "O YHVH, God, You have begun to show your servant [your greatness]. . . . "

(Deuteronomy 3:23)

We should comment on [Moses'] saying, a second time, **O YHVH, God**, after he has already said **I pleaded with YHVH**; and also on the purpose of the word **saying**. The Sages, may they rest in peace, have offered their interpretations, and ostensibly it appears that **I pleaded with YHVH at that time, saying, "O YHVH, God"**, is a prayer in itself.¹

To understand this, we will first clarify the haftarah [Isaiah 40:1-2]:

Comfort, oh comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem [and declare to her that her term of service is over, that her iniquity is expiated;] for she has received at the hand of God double for all her sins.

It is necessary to understand the meaning of Dabberu 'al lev yerushalayim ("speak tenderly to Jerusalem") -- how lev, heart, pertains to Jerusalem -- and also "for she has received at the hand of God double for all her sins." It is astounding that the Blessed Holy One would exact, God forbid, double for offenses! One should understand this according to

that which I heard from my teacher, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come: the king who is in Israel is the heart of Israel.² Using this idea, he explained the verse "How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me" [1 Samuel 16:2]. Examining closely, [he asked,] Why was he afraid precisely about going? Indeed, the trip could have been in silence, and he might better have said, "How can I return after I anoint another to be king? Saul will kill me." He explained that the king is the heart of the community of Israel. And the heart listens,³ meaning it understands. This is why he said, "How can I go? Saul will hear of it": he is still the king of Israel prior to the anointing of another, and he will understand why I am going -- for what purpose and why -- and "he will kill me." However, he did not fear the return, for David would already be anointed as king, and [Saul] would not hear nor understand, for he [Samuel] would do the thing in secret. His words extend to this point.

After this, I saw in Sefer Yezirah [6:3]: "The heart in the body is like a king in battle." The heart is the king of the body and the limbs,⁴ and it is certainly not the way of the king's army to do anything without his knowledge. From this each person can understand that the way of all one's limbs is likewise to conduct themselves according to the heart, for it contains the power of life that animates

the entire body, and without it no one would lift his hand or foot.⁵ The heart is the life-force of all the limbs.⁶

I saw in the book The Beginning of Wisdom that the heart is called Jerusalem because it is in the middle of the body as Jerusalem is at the center of the world. And this is what the Tanna said [R. El'azar, in Pirkei Avot 2:13, in answer to the question, "Which is the best way?"]: "A good heart." Said [Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai], 'I prefer the answer [of El'azar], for in his words your words are included.'⁷ For [the heart] is the root of each of the body's limbs; it is the aspect of Jerusalem, and the spirit of life which it contains is the king sitting on the throne. This is the meaning of the saying, if the head of the people is good, the whole is good;⁸ then all the limbs behave following it, like troops following the king.

But understand what a "good heart" is, and what the good that pertains to the heart. The goodness of anything is according to its nature. For example, in regard to drink, goodness is when it is sweet to the palate; but the good in regard to clothing is otherwise, namely, the color, such as black or white, or being properly mended. What is the goodness and perfection of the heart? Without doubt, the good and perfect heart is a broken heart, as [it says in Isaiah 57:15] "[On high, in holiness] I dwell, yet with the contrite [and the lowly in spirit]," and "True sacrifice to God is a broken spirit; [a broken and contrite heart, oh God,

you will not despise]" [Psalm 51:19-20].⁹ And the opposite is the case with haughtiness of heart, for "every one who is arrogant (gevah lev) is an abomination to God" [Proverbs 16:5].

The heart was created so that God could dwell in it, as it is written [Exodus 25:8]: "Make me a sanctuary, and I will dwell in their midst" -- actually within them! "Worthy is the one who makes Him a proper dwelling in his heart" [Tikkunei Zohar, Tikkun 6, p. 22b]. It turns out that the heart was created to be God's sanctuary, and God dwells only in a broken and contrite heart. Therefore the perfection of the heart is to be broken within. Thus, when it is perfect, it is called Jerusalem. It shall be called City of Holiness, her king within her,¹⁰ except, God forbid, when there is arrogance in it; then it is called by the name Rum, Haughtiness.¹¹

This, then, is what the prophet suggested in the clarity of his language: dabberu 'al-lev, "say concerning the heart," that it should be "Jerusalem."¹² For when the heart is Jerusalem, then her king is the broken spirit within, "righteous and triumphant" [Zechariah 9:9] for his people, the limbs, [delivered] from the hand of the oppressors, that is, the evil yezer, God forbid.¹³ Then they conduct themselves following [the heart], like an army after the king, and do not scatter this way and that, bringing about [what Judges 17:6 describes] "everyone did what was

right in his own eyes," "like sheep without a shepherd" [Numbers 27:17]. They have a true shepherd, their king within them; thus "her term of service is over." By means of this, she is worthy that "her iniquity is expiated," for more than all the sacrifices, "true sacrifice to God is a broken spirit." Alternatively, one could explain "her iniquity is expiated" following the Talmud's statement that to one who returns out of love, vices are accounted as virtues [Yoma 86b]. Thus, sin is turned into acceptance, raẓon, expressed by the word "expiated," nirẓah. "For she has received at the hand of God double [for all her sins]": the heart of one who returns out of love is constantly broken within him, and love of his Creator burns in him; for inward love and awe are two lovers that are not separated¹⁴ and for him sins become merit. This is the meaning of "she has received at the hand of God double": [both] for the sins and for the virtues.¹⁵

Now we come to explain the passage with which we began. This word I heard from my master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come: when there is a zaddik in the world, he unifies all physical things in the world, both what occurs and what is said. This is why our teacher Moses, may he rest in peace, prayed: "May the Lord's community not be like sheep that have no shepherd" [Numbers 21:17], rather let them have a shepherd who unifies. The "sheep" are acts of unification.¹⁶ Understand this.

Now, the root of the reign (malkhut) of the house of David lies in the fact that David, if it can be said, is the root of malkhut, which "rules over all" [Psalm 103:19]; and apart from him no one could lift up his hand or foot in anything, small or great.¹⁷ This is like what is said in the name of my master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, on the Sages' interpretation [Midrash Shemuel 13:4]: Israel was not exiled until she denied God and the kingship of the house of David, and He will not redeem them until they return to God and to David, their king. This accords with the passage "We have no portion in David. . . . Every man to his tent [O Israel]," [2 Samuel 20:1] and the comment "Read not 'to his tent,' but 'to his God'"; but of the time of redemption, it is said: "They will seek the Lord their God, and David their king" [Hosea 3:5]. He [the Ba'al Shem Tov], may his memory be a blessing, explained that the matter of the kingdom of the house of David refers to everything that one does, small or great; even reaching a hand into one's pocket to take out two pennies and finding only one is called the kingdom of the house of David.¹⁸ The explanation: to understand that it is malkhut which rules over all and arouses one by means of these afflictions to return to his Creator, blessed be He, as the Sages said, "At what point do sufferings begin?"¹⁹ ['Arakin 16b]. "The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious" [Kohelet 10:12].

Moreover, one should understand that all things are formed from Him, may He be blessed; therefore He is called by the name YHVH, because he causes all beings to exist (mehavveh kol ha-havayot). This is the sense of "They will seek YHVH their God (YHVH 'eloheihem)," for all things of nature, which are the aspect 'elohim (which in gematria equals nature), are from YHVH, blessed be He, who gives being to all that exists.²⁰ This is what Israel will seek; and also "David, their king": that their king might be David in actuality, from dalet to vav and to dalet.²¹ Understand this.

Thus what our teacher Moses, may he rest in peace, said: **I pleaded with YHVH at that time, saying, "O YHVH God"** -- this itself is the prayer, that it would be as at the time of the redemption, and they would "seek YHVH their God, and David their king"; and this by means of Moses' entering the Land.²² Then Jerusalem and the land of Israel would have been an eternal inheritance, and Israel would not have gone into exile, as is known. One who is enlightened will understand. God will gather the dispersed of his people Israel;²³ and among us will be carried out the verse "They will seek YHVH their God, and David their king." Amen.

The verse **I pleaded with YHVH at that time, saying** makes another hint. For "all times are not the same" [Mishnah

Tamid 1:2], nor are all moments equal; but to the zaddik, who is the foundation of the world,²⁴ by way of his thought, God sends that which needs to be said at that specific moment. In this regard, look at the passage "I came today to the spring" [Genesis 24:42], and what I said about it there.²⁵ You can understand the hint here in this way: I **pleaded with YHVH:** the prayer of Moses, the humble and lowly, was: **at that time, saying:** may I be able to speak in accordance with the time and according to what is needed in this moment. One who is enlightened will understand.

You, who hold fast (devekim) to YHVH your God, are all alive today.

(Deuteronomy 4:4)

We should explain this as an allusion following that which is known, [that] in the recitation of the Shema¹ there are 248 words when one adds "YHVH your God, true ('emet)."²⁶ By this an individual's 248 limbs are renewed every day. This is what the verse hints: **You, 'attem,** contains the same letters as 'emet, true; **who hold fast to YHVH your God** means that when you attach the word 'emet to YHVH your God, to you will be drawn [being] **all alive today**. In other words, one has to recite in this way each day. Understand this.

There is another allusion.

As is known, YHWH is one, and Israel are one, as is written, "Who is like your people Israel, one nation" [2 Samuel 7:23]. Therefore, they are attached to God, may He be blessed, for it is fitting for one to cleave to one. Whenever Israel are bound and joined together in complete unity, they are then considered one, and God, blessed be He, Who is One, rests upon them.²⁷ However, when their heart is divided, and they are separated from one another, God forbid, it is impossible for them to be joined to one, and God does not rest upon them; but, God forbid, a strange god rests upon them, as is written: "Because our God is not in our midst these evils have befallen us" [Deuteronomy 31:17]. Then they are considered at the level of death, which is the aspect of Sama'el.²⁸

This is the allusion in the verse: **You who hold fast** suggests that when you are joined and united to each other, then **to YHWH your God**. That is, [at that point] you certainly are attached to God, one to one, and God, blessed be He, the Life of all that lives, will rest upon you. This is the sense of being **all alive today**; but in the opposite case, God forbid, they are considered dead, as already mentioned. However, when they are in a single unity, then it is becoming for one to cleave to one; and YHWH, the One, dwells with them. Amen.

Observe them and do them, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the eyes of the peoples, who on hearing of all these laws will say, "Surely, this great nation is a wise and discerning people."

(Deuteronomy 4:6)

The Ba'al ha-Turim states that the first letters of the words **these** [laws] **will say**, "**Surely, a people**" spell 'ervah, unchastity, and their final letters spell mikveh, a ritual bath.²⁹ This is the meaning of [his further statement] **surely** (rak) is a limitation": the mikveh's purification from unchastity is only found within Israel. It is in such a manner that we should explain the verse, as I said concerning the mishnah [Hagigah 3:1] "Greater stringency applies to that which is holy" in that one immerses vessels within vessels.³⁰ For the vessels are the souls of Israel; and when they are attached and united to each other, then they are purified, one soul in the soul above it, up to 'Ein Sof, blessed be He. As I have said, YHVH is the mikveh of Israel" [Jeremiah 17:13]; for if they are on one level, the mikveh purifies [them]. And one who is on the level of Israel also purifies souls, yet God is the source of purification.³¹

Now, it is also known that mikveh is parallel to teshuvah, repentance, which is the mystery of the Mother above, in accord with [Be-Midbar Rabbah 19:8]: His mother will come and cleanse her son.³² This is the secret of Binah, understanding; and since one who is "Israel" is like a

mikveh, as already noted, such a one is the mystery of Binah, and, necessarily, also of Hokhmah, wisdom, for Hokhmah and Binah are the two lovers that are never separated.³³ This is what the words **Observe them and do them, for that is your wisdom and your understanding** are suggesting: Hokhmah and Binah, because the final letters of **these will say, "Surely, a people"** spell mikveh, following the Ba'al ha-Turim, and because Israel also has the aspect of the mikveh, which is Hokhmah and Binah. Thus the verse reads, **they will say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and discerning people."** As the Ba'al ha-Turim notes, "Surely is a limitation": in other words, only in Israel are they **wise and discerning**, since they have wisdom and understanding by means of being the aspect mikveh. So it seems to me. Understand this.

**And what great nation has laws and rules as
righteous (zaddikim) as all this Torah?**
(Deuteronomy 4:8)

We should interpret this as an allusion, following the verse "Light is sown for the righteous" [Psalm 97:11]: the Blessed Holy One takes light from His essence, blessed be He and blessed be His name, and sows that light in the world; and from it is grown a zaddik in the world.³⁴ For example, Abraham was the aspect of the white light of morning, Isaac was of red light; and so also Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Joseph, King David, may he rest in peace, and the rest of the zaddikim, wise men, and people of understanding in each and

every generation. Moses' aspect was the light of the entire Torah, and therefore the whole Torah was revealed by him. Similarly, there are zaddikim whose aspect is one light of a single mizvah which includes all 613. For this reason it is said, "About what was your father most heedful? Of zizit" [Shabbat 118b]. Thus, a zaddik comes to the world and gives light to the world, each according to his aspect and in accord with the light from which he has been created, in Torah or in the mizvah of charity or hospitality, or by warning against and destroying sins and attributes such as pride which are contained in the prohibition, "You shall have no other gods" [Exodus 20:3].³⁵ One should explain that this is the hint of the verse **What great nation has laws and rules as righteous (zaddikim): the laws and rules are themselves the zaddikim, and the zaddikim are laws and rules.**³⁶ This is enough for one who understands.

This is what we wanted to explain; the year of God's counsel, 5540 [1780].³⁷

**You were shown, that you might know that YHVH
is God; there is none beside Him.**

(Deuteronomy 4:35)

This should be explained as an allusion, in light of what I have said regarding the verse "He is your praise and He is your God" [Deuteronomy 10:21]: When an individual

wants to recite "Blessed are you, YHWH," as soon as he says "Blessed," one who understands knows that he is speaking to YHWH, blessed be He, because in thought he also thinks of YHWH before he says "Blessed," even though not yet saying YHWH with his lips. The same applies before the word "you." And the difficulty is why it then says "you, YHWH."³⁸

One should understand this matter in light of the example of a king who has many officers, one more distinguished than another. What is their greatness? Their greatness lies in their importance. And what constitutes their importance? It lies in being closer to the king. The one who is closest to the king is the one whom the king loves more than his companions. And what is the nature of his love, that the king loves him? Because of his wisdom; recognizing more fully the greatness of the king, he therefore loves the king more, is in awe of him, and is [too] ashamed before him to disobey his will. For he most clearly recognizes the importance of the king, how his glory fills the earth, and apart from him no one can lift his hand or foot.³⁹ He brings everything into being and gives life to all, and "his sovereign reign is over all."⁴⁰ Therefore, this officer wants to enlarge and exalt the greatness of the king in the eyes of all, so that they too might recognize his significance and his goodness, which fill the world. Therefore the wise king, who knows his heart and his good thought and pure will, draws him closer and loves him with a

true love, as [in 2 Chronicles 20:7] "Abraham, my beloved."⁴¹ Thus, on those occasions when an individual comes to ask the King for a certain thing, the proper procedure is to begin with His praise; afterwards, one can ask for what he needs.⁴² The moral is self-evident.

Therefore, when a wise person comes before the King and begins his praises, at the beginning of the word of praise, which he is commencing, he thinks of the King. For example, when one begins, "May He be exalted, extolled, and magnified,"⁴³ before he mentions the name of the King and his essence, those who are alert and wise, who stand in the inner chambers of the King's supernal palaces and are close to the king,⁴⁴ certainly know before he mentions the King's name and essence that he is praising none other than the King who stands before him. For who is the fool walking in darkness⁴⁵ who would praise someone else in the presence of the King? Such a one surely convicts himself to have his head cut off. But those who are far from the King, standing in the courtyards and outer chambers, and those servants distant from the King because their intelligence is not robust and strong, understand this only when one utters the essence directly to the King and mentions His great name. Then they all know that his praise has reached the King Himself; all stand in fear and trembling to hear his praise and to affirm his words if they are correct in the sight of the King. Thus, when

Israel stand to pray the Eighteen Benedictions, [the angels] let their wings hang down to hear the word.⁴⁶

Such is the lesson [to draw from this example]: When one says "Blessed," in his thought it is "May YHVH be blessed"; but "are you, YHVH" [is added] in order to elevate those lowly worlds that are far from the King. Then, by saying "You," which is the essence of the King, and afterwards, "YHVH," all are filled with terror and pleasure, awe and fear, and listen to the voice of the one who gives praise; all are raised up by him.⁴⁷ This is the hint in the verse, "He is your God" and "He is your praise"⁴⁸: at the beginning, He is "Blessed," but still hidden, for one does not yet address his essence directly -- that He is "you" as well as "your God" -- the name of your God, as previously noted. He is also your praise.⁴⁹

This is the explanation of **You were shown, that you might know**: the word **you** is to show, so that all the lower worlds created with the twenty-two letters, by the name of God ('Elohim) -- even all things of nature -- might know. All will know **that YHVH is God ('Elohim)**, meaning that the whole earth is filled with the glory of YHVH; through Him is formed all nature, which is the aspect 'Elohim, whose glory fills the earth.⁵⁰ In this way [i.e., by saying the "you, YHVH" portion of the blessing], one gives life to all, and raises them to their root, YHVH, blessed be He. **There is none beside Him.** Understand this.

**And because He loved your fathers, He chose
their offspring after them and brought you
out [from Egypt] with his presence. . . .**
(Deuteronomy 4:37)

In my humble opinion, we should give an explanation here in the allusive manner, following what is said in the holy Zohar: the shadow of R. Pinhas ben Ya'ir appeared in the eyes of R. Abba, etc. Look there. R. Abba had been teaching Torah in his name, in a place in which R. Pinhas had taught; and then the actual face and shadow of R. Pinhas was seen on him. It should be said that it is this which is suggested in the verse. Tahat (**because**) suggests a place, as in "bowing down among (tahat) the prisoners" [Isaiah 10:4], where it indicates place.⁵¹ **Because He loved your fathers** implies that they will be called by the name "father" because there was begetting by the words of Torah.⁵² **He chose their offspring after them:** when one's offspring after him, or one's student, who is also called one's offspring, teaches words of Torah in the same place in one's name, then **He brought you out with his presence.** That is, He makes you appear, concretely, in the face of the one who teaches in your name.⁵³ Your face appears on his, as has already been said. Understand this.

Alternatively, one could explain **Because He loved your fathers, He chose their offspring after them** [as follows]:

My master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, said, concerning the Gemara [Ta'anit 5b] "Our father Jacob did not die," that it alludes to the holy Torah which will never cease, since it is eternal.⁵⁴ And I say to finish, following this path, the rest of the Sage's words as well. The Gemara asks, "Was it for nothing that the embalmers embalmed?" In other words, we in fact perceive with our senses that the Torah does have an end, like stories of events -- what once was but is now nought. It replies, "I am interpreting Scripture: '[Have no fear, My servant Jacob . . .] I will deliver you [from far away], your offspring from the land of their captivity' [Jeremiah 30:10], comparing him to his offspring. As his offspring are alive, so is he alive." In other words, when we interpret a certain passage, we necessarily ask difficult questions, and completely undo it with arguments, until it becomes many expositions, branches of the Torah spreading out from that verse. Out of the question [in the Gemara] it thus arises that at first the verse is completely shattered and annihilated, until it is expanded into many meanings of Torah and learnings which come out of it. This is what is meant by "his offspring": that which is given birth by the Torah and multiplied by Scripture.⁵⁵ This is the meaning of "comparing him," that is, the Torah, "to his offspring." "As his

offspring are alive" -- that is, it is not annihilated, but on the contrary is augmented by a number of facets -- so "he" himself is alive. Even though it appears that it is destroyed, it is certainly eternal.⁵⁶ One who is enlightened will understand.

It also should be explained that the verse **Because He loved your fathers** makes the following hint: love is hesed, has, dalet; and has [by gematria] equals hayyim, life.⁵⁷ **He chose their offspring after them** can be understood as previously mentioned, following [Ta'anit 5b] "comparing him to his offspring. As his offspring are alive, so is he alive." **He brought you out with his presence** (be-fanav) means that through his offspring, as noted above, He brings forth a number of faces (panim) to the Torah through interpretations of the Scripture.⁵⁸ One who is enlightened will understand.

I am YHWH your God, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt.

(Deuteronomy 5:6)

Understand this commandment after you understand [what is said in] the Ra'aya Meheimna, at the beginning of portion Va-'Era, on page 25 [Zohar 2:25a]: "'I will take you [to be my people, and I will be your God. And you shall know

that I, YHVH, am your God]' [Exodus 6:7]: This command is the first of all commandments, to know Him generally . . . and in particular, etc."⁵⁹

Let us also explain what I heard from my teacher concerning the passage "Know the God of your father" [1 Chronicles 28:9]: Who in heaven or earth could know the least bit about Him? Moreover, once I heard from my teacher that "know" is an expression for uniting, as in the verse "And the man knew Eve" [Genesis 4:1]. Indeed, at that time I heard from him,⁶⁰ in brief, that the purpose of knowing is that one know that all his actions in particular, and the whole world in general, are all from Him, may He be blessed. "The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious" [Kohelet 10:12]. [His words] are also deep and profound, and it is impossible to explain them.

In any case, as a mere indication, in brief: If the individual finds himself in wealth, honor and great abundance, he should know that this is the dimension of hesed within the Shekhinah. For humanity is the limbs of the Shekhinah, until in the inclusion of all the world the Shi'ur Komah is made complete.⁶¹ And when one is in genuine poverty and suffering, God forbid, it is the dimension of gevurah within the Shekhinah. Then one should pray from that place in the mystery of "With this shall Aaron come into the holy place" [Leviticus 16:3].⁶² But when one's situation is made up of both [abundance and lack], he should know that this is

the dimension of tif'eret; and so forth in regard to all the attributes. "Let one who is wise hear and increase in learning" [Proverbs 1:5]. If a person serves God constantly, but at one time cannot, he should know that this is also within the Shekhinah, and is called katnut, first or second.⁶³ In such a way he will know that everything within an individual, including all that happens to him, is in the Shekhinah; and he will know to unify such an attribute, to connect it with the supernal attribute which is above it. All of this is in the person, generally; and within this there are further fine details, through which the perfect individual can unite the Blessed Holy One with each step and with each and every thing that he does--even in the material realm, in his eating, his everyday affairs, and his business. Everything is to be united and to be known according to its dimension within the Shekhinah. It is concerning this that it is said, "Know the God of your father."⁶⁴ Understand. By this the passage from the Ra'aya Meheimna mentioned above is clarified: the matter of the general and particular. Understand this.

Moreover, the first command, **I am**, is well explained: Thus can one know to connect the dimensions of day and night, called general and specific, as is known.⁶⁵ This is the meaning of **[I am] your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt**: there, they knew in general because in exile it is impossible to unify in each attribute in particular, as

is recognized in regard to the human person, who is a low rung in true exile as pertains to serving God, may He be blessed. But after they came out of exile, called **Egypt**, then they knew [how] to unify in particular. May God make atonement for me.⁶⁶ His language ends here; and this is enough.

And it shall be righteousness for us, if we observe faithfully all the words of this Torah.

(Deuteronomy 6:25)⁶⁷

There are a great number of detailed discussions of this passage, and many explain that it alludes to the promises of the world to come. To clarify this, with the help of God, may He be blessed, I will first explain the verse "You were shown, that you might know that YHVH is God; there is none beside Him" [Deuteronomy 4:35].

From my master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, I heard the following concerning this Gemara in tractate Shabbat [31a]: "He will be the faithfulness of your times' . . . and even so, 'the fear of YHVH is his treasure' [Isaiah 33:6]: if there is the fear of YHVH, yes, and if not, no."⁶⁸ The Gemara includes a parable of one who says to his companion, "Bring up a measure of wheat for me." . . . [He went and

brought it up.] He said [to him], "Did you mix a small measure of salt in it?" He replied, "No." He said, "If so, it would have been better if you had not brought it up."⁶⁹ On this [the Ba'al Shem Tov], may his memory be a blessing, made the precise observation that, in fact, the example is not similar to its application; for in the parable the salt is secondary and the wheat is the important thing, but in the application, the awe is essential and the Torah is subordinate. In the purity of his language he expanded his reply, his mouth speaking great things,⁷⁰ concerning the inner mysteries hidden within. The substance of [his] words was that when the Holy One, blessed be He and blessed be His name, created His world, the world was not able to stay in existence, because everything returned to its root, to Nothing, blessed be He, until he created Israel; then the world was established.⁷¹ The name "Israel" indicates this, for the resh is Wisdom, the lamed is Understanding, the alef is Knowledge, and the remaining letters of the word Israel, y-s, are the being (yeshut) in the world's existence.⁷² Being was made from nothing (yesh me-'ayin). This is the meaning of the name Israel; and such was the foundation of the worlds: nothing became being. Therefore Israel is the sustaining force of all the worlds and of creation. For if it were not, everything would return to its original state, to Nothing; and the being that is in Israel establishes the existence of all the worlds. This only holds when the

Israelite has within him just that amount of substantiality needed to sustain the worlds; but God forbid if he has more within him.⁷³ The content of his awe-filled words ends here.

In understanding this, the mouth is unable to speak, and "all words are exhausted" [Kohelet 1:8] because of the depth of the subject and one's inability to comprehend. For, in my humble opinion, the entire Torah alludes to this; and through this one can understand several teachings of the Zohar. One of these is in portion va-Yeze [v. 1], page 154b: "Come and see: the world was established on account of Jacob. And if you wonder, was it not on account of Abraham? as one finds [Bereshit Rabba 12:9 on Genesis 2:4]: 'When they were created' (be-hibbar'am): read not be-hibbar'am, but rather be-'avraham, in Abraham.' However, on account of Jacob, Abraham exists, as it is written [Isaiah 29:22]: 'Thus said YHVH to [the House of] Jacob, who redeemed Abraham.'" For Abraham is wisdom, called being; because he was close to the emanator he was not able to exist but kept returning to his root, to Nothing, until Jacob came, who is called Israel, and "redeemed Abraham."⁷⁴ This is an expression of revelation, like one who redeems the thing that has been put away or pawned, or [redeems someone] from the custody of prison: he brings the thing out into the open. Thus Jacob revealed Abraham, wisdom and great love (hesed), so that the world and all that is in it might exist -- being

out of Nothing, as already mentioned. The name Israel points to this, for the resh is wisdom, as noted above.

Therefore, it is in the power of the people Israel, that [God] will perform for them miracles and wonders unsearchable and without number, for the Creator, blessed be He, created the world for their sake, and they are the ones who sustain the world, called being. And it is in their power to return being to nothing, and to bring forth a new thing, "like clay in the hands of the potter" [Jeremiah 18:6], turning one thing into another, changing the original material into a form different from the form it had at first. It is this which is suggested by the name Israel: when yesh, "being", is brought into proximity with the three letters resh, alef, lamed, as already noted, at that point things are sweetened in their root, all existence in the mystery of Nothing.⁷⁵

But enough of this; abbreviation will suffice for the wise, for in this matter there is a need to go on at length because it is profound. All is by means of their root in the Creator, blessed be He and blessed be His name. This is the meaning of "He who does great things beyond ('ad 'ain) understanding," miracles "and marvelous things without ('ad 'ain) number" [Job 9:10]: it is precisely 'ayin, Nothing. This is manifest, for the world was created with the name 'Elohim, which in gematria equals nature; but it is in the power of the name YHVH, blessed be He, to change nature for His people

Israel, children of his chosen ones in whom His soul took pleasure, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, through the zaddikim of the generation, as in Egypt through Moses and Aaron.⁷⁶ Or, if it can be said, at times He alone does this, as "He who [alone] does great marvels" [Psalm 136:4]. Likewise in every generation He has been doing miracles and wonders by changing things from one determinant to another.⁷⁷ This explains "You were shown, that you might know": through you, Israel, "you were shown, that you might know that YHVH is God"; for all things of nature are connected to Him, blessed be He and blessed be His name, and through you this is revealed to the world. "There is none beside Him": The Sages expounded [Sanhedrin 67b]: even magicians, for without Him no one shall lift his hand or foot; His dominion extends even to the place of the shells and His sovereignty rules over all [Psalm 103:19].⁷⁸

Toward understanding the root of these things, I will hint a little; and if God wills, in another place with His help I will speak at length on the nature of the yesh of Israel and the 'ayin. In the utmost brevity, it is the following: the Israelite tears all physical cravings from him because of the Creator, in order to do God's will. As the Tanna said, "Undo your will [for the sake of His will]" [Mishnah Avot 2:4]: He sets all of his desires and his existence aside before the Holy One; and he sustains himself only so that his body can exist to serve God, blessed be He

and blessed be His name.⁷⁹ So it is in all the worlds. The Blessed Holy One contemplated this at the time of the creation of the world, and therefore the worlds were created for the sake of Israel, as has already been said, and they were the ones who brought about and sustained [the creation].

Through this, one can understand several passages in the Torah and the Talmud and the Midrash. This is the meaning of "You have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed" [Genesis 32:29]: Your name shall be called Israel, for you have overcome all material and natural things, and made yourself stronger than them, as your name shows: thus are you called by the name Israel.⁸⁰ Brevity will suffice for the wise. We find this to be the case from the time when creation began; and it will be so forever. Thus the beginning of creation and the begetting of this nation were supernatural, like the following teaching which I saw in the book Megillat Sefer: Our ancestor Abraham, may he rest in peace, was sterile, and the begetting [of Isaac] was a miraculous event; and likewise, in the case of Isaac with regard to Jacob.⁸¹ I have already explained this elsewhere, and will explain further if God wills.

In accord with this a teaching of the Zohar can be understood, in portion Va-Yeze [v. 1], page 157b: "Come and see: 'for I have surely hired you' [Genesis 30:16] to take the body from him. . . . And this is the meaning of 'I have surely hired you': you, your very body! . . . Issachar:

there is reward (yesh sakhar).⁸² This is also the sense of [Proverbs 8:21] "endowing those who love me with being (yesh).⁸² This may be studied there. Also, this is the meaning of [the teaching, *ibid.*] that Issachar is the actual body of Jacob, called the Torah, and therefore he was called Issachar, yesh sakhar, there is reward.⁸²

The upshot of all this is that the being of all the worlds is the smallest and lowest thing about them, for they all are living spiritual entities. Nevertheless, it is the basis of the existence of all the worlds, and the life that is in them. Such is also the case in regard to awe: even though it is compared to a measure of salt, it is the most essential part of the whole Torah; without it there are neither words nor one to speak.

Now let us return to our subject, to explain the verse **And it shall be righteousness (zedakah) for us:** it is well known that Malkhut is called zedek; but when she is united with the Blessed Holy One, she is called zedakah, for in zedakah, the giving of charity, YHVH is actualized through the one who gives and the one who receives. Look in the holy Zohar [1:90b on Genesis 15:6]: "He reckoned it [to him] as righteousness -- as compassion." Look there.⁸³ For zedakah is called the place in which all the faces shine; as the holy Zohar states [3:89b on Daniel 9:7], "To you, YHVH, belongs righteousness (zedakah), but to us (lanu) shamefulness."⁸⁴ Lanu in gematria equals 'elohim, the attribute of judgment, as

is mentioned in the kavvanah of the Ari, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, on the verse "Remember, YHVH, what has befallen us (lanu)" [Lamentations 5:1], for they turned the attribute of compassion into that of judgment.⁸⁵ The zaddikim, on the contrary, turn judgment into compassion. It is this which is indicated in Talmud Berakhot [17b, on Isaiah 46:12]: "those who are far from zedakah" are the zaddikim.⁸⁶ In other words, they do not need righteousness. At first glance, this is astonishing; but in this way it may be understood: they change the attribute of judgment to that of compassion, and from this actual righteousness is made. This is the allusion here. **And it shall be righteousness for us (lanu) if we observe** means that even the attribute of judgment, called lanu, will be changed to compassion, and zedek will become zedakah, through observance of the Torah.⁸⁷ Understand this.

**He repays those who hate Him to their face,
destroying them; He will not be slow with one
who hates Him, but will repay him to his
face.**

(Deuteronomy 7:10)

This should be explained in accordance with the saying of the Sages [Avodah Zarah 3b]: "In the time to come the Blessed Holy One will bring forth the sun from its sheath; the zaddikim will be healed by it, and those who are

evil will be punished by it." This is the explanation of the verse: **To their face ('el panav) destroying them** hints that He lights his face ('el 'avar panav) with the light of the Face of the King of life,⁸⁸ **destroying them:** thus the evil one is punished. **He will not be slow (ye'aḥer)** is an expression for "posterior" ('aḥorayim): He does not turn away from him; instead, He brings light to his face. **He will repay him:** thus is he punished.⁸⁹ Understand this.

FROM VARIOUS PORTIONS

"And you shall set the entrance of the ark in its side."

(Noah, Genesis 6:16)¹

First let us explain what is said in the Gemara [Sanhedrin 38b]: "Whatever source the heretics quote to support their heresy, its refutation is by its side." One must understand this according to the principle that darkness is impossible without light, and evil without good, for light appears and is recognized out of darkness; and good emerges from evil even though it is covered and in hiding there. The good must be purified so that evil is expelled and the good can rise above.

Along these lines one can understand what is written in the holy books of the learned rabbi, our teacher Rabbi Ya'akov Yosef ha-Kohen, in the name of my master, my grandfather, may his soul abide in Eden, concerning Mishnah tractate Avot [5:17], "There are four types among those who frequent the study house, etc." Look there.² So it is with prayer, when strange thoughts sometimes come to one to hide the light of Torah and of divine service from him, God forbid. One who is wise, his eyes in his head [Kohelet

2:14], will understand that there is a great light covered and hidden in that very darkness, for there is no place void of Him.³ When he understands this, and believes with complete faith, then he is strengthened in his service and in the light of life and good. In this way he purifies and clarifies the good from the evil, so that the evil is rejected. That is, the foulness and refuse is actually expelled and falls, and the good rises above.⁴ This is the secret of Rosh ha-Shanah and the three books opened on that day.⁵ Understand this.

And so it is in everything. It is in this way that we should understand the intention of what the Sages said: "Whatever source the heretics quote to support their heresy" -- that is, they brought proof from the Torah for heresy, may the Merciful One protect us -- "its teshuvah [refutation] is at its side." In other words, there at the side of their darkness is a great light in concealment, which on the contrary, teaches faith in God, may He be blessed. However, it is covered and not revealed; the darkness covers it.

So should the allusion in this passage be understood, as my master, my grandfather, made clear: the word teivah, ark, alludes to a word, also called teivah. As it is written, "Make a window for the teivah" [Genesis 6:16]: he, may his memory be a blessing, said that one should see how to bring light into the word that one brings out of one's mouth. And he expanded on this.

That is what the passage says here: if one sees that at times the light is covered and does not appear or is not recognized at all, and one does not know what to do to open the covering so that the light may be revealed -- for this it says, **the door of the teivah**, that is, the opening by which to open the word so that it will not remain closed and shut in the secret sense of "I was struck dumb" [Psalm 39:3], God forbid, **You shall set in its side**. In other words, if you look for it, you will find an opening to the teivah, right by its side. That is, in that very darkness itself there is certainly a great light, but it is concealed. "It is not in heaven . . . Neither is it beyond the sea. . . . But the word is very nigh unto you, in your mouth [and in your heart]" [Deuteronomy 30:14].⁶ Understand!

[Sarai said to Abram,] "Go in to my maid; perhaps I shall be built up through her. [. . . He cohabited with Hagar . . .] and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was lowered in her esteem. And Sarai said to Abram, "May my wrong be upon you! I myself put my maid [in your bosom;] now that she sees that she is pregnant [I am lowered in her esteem." . . .] Then Sarai treated her maid harshly, and she ran away from her.

[An angel of the Lord found her . . .] and said, "Return to your mistress, and submit to her harsh treatment." [And the angel of the Lord said to her, "I will greatly increase your offspring. . . ."]

Therefore the well was called Be'er la-hai ro'i.

(Lekh Lekha, Genesis 16:2-14)⁷

In accord with that which R. Nahman Horodenkar of blessed memory said about the verse, **Go in to my maid**, it should be explained that the guidance of an individual in the matter of Torah study and the service of God, may He be blessed, is alluded to in these verses. I will follow him to fill out his words, and to add to his holy words concerning the holy verses which follow [the one on which he commented].

I heard from our aforementioned teacher and rabbi R. Nahman, concerning **Go in to my maid** [**; perhaps I shall be built up through her**], that one who engages in Torah and divine service that is not for its own sake is called a **maid**. And thus the meaning of **Go in to my maid** is that one should study and occupy oneself even if not for its own sake--**perhaps I shall be built up through her**. That is, this is what the Shekhinah says: "Perhaps from that which is not for its own sake he will come to that which is for its own sake."⁸ His words end here.

We should understand and explain his holy words, that **maid** indicates the level of that which is not for its own sake. For the truth is that one who studies Torah for its own sake, and not for any prospect of benefit or of receiving reward, one who thereby only serves God, may He be blessed, is actually a "son"; for such is one called who does God's will, and this is certainly the desire of God, blessed be He.

However, one who engages in Torah and service which are not for their own sake, but for a certain benefit or reward, is called "servant" and **maid**, for all their toil is only for the purpose of receiving from their master.⁹ In their eyes, the reward is the main object: all the striving of their work is solely for the sake of the reward. There are several levels in this matter: there is the level of "servant", and that of "maidservant" and **maid**; but Torah for its own sake is the level of "mistress" and "queen" (malkhah), since by means of service for its own sake the Blessed Holy One and His Shekhinah are made to reign (mamlikhim) in all the worlds. [Such service] brings about the revelation of His divinity; "His kingdom (malkhuto) rules over all" [Ps. 103:19]; and all the shells are humbled beneath the hand of holiness.¹⁰

It is this which is hinted here in the verse, according to the words of our teacher and master Nahman mentioned above. **And Sarai said to Abraham:** seeing that at the outset the individual is not immediately able to study and practice for its own sake, wholeheartedly and in truth, because of the evil urge which dwells within him, the Shekhinah, as if it were possible, places in his heart [the impetus] to do that which is not for its own sake. The basis of her intention is like the saying of the Sages of blessed memory [Sanhedrin 105b]: "From that which is not for its own sake, one comes to that which is for its own sake." This is the sense of **Go in to my maid**, the level of that which is not

for its own sake; **perhaps I shall be built up through her:** that from this her building up might come about,¹¹ that it [the study and practice] might be for its own sake, the true aim. This is the good and pleasant path: when one comes, afterwards, to "for its own sake", he then raises up even study which is not for its own sake. For one becomes the throne for the other, as is known in the name of my master, my grandfather, may he rest in Eden, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come.

However, there are people who begin studying not for its own sake, and so remain all their lives -- forever. They never in the least reach the true aim, God forbid. Moreover, they reach a state of great arrogance and boasting, and despise the zaddikim who study little with kavvanah, saying, "Our hands are raised up,"¹² for they stuff themselves with a great deal of Torah. It is this which is hinted in the verse **when she saw that she had conceived:** when that one who is on the level of the maid has seen that he has already studied much Torah -- **she has conceived** by means of the filling of his belly with Torah (the word "conceived", haratah, is also equivalent in gematria to torah, with the one included)¹³-- **her mistress is lowered in her esteem.** In other words, despised and abhorrent in his esteem become those zaddikim who study a little with devotion of the heart, for its own sake. This is what is meant by **her mistress:** the level of "mistress", as already mentioned.¹⁴ Also, the numerical

value of "her mistress", gevirtah, and haratah are the same, which is to suggest, along the lines of "There is no difference between leavened and unleavened bread. . . .," that to all appearances one cannot distinguish one who engages [in study] for its own sake from one who engages not for its own sake. It is a single occupation, and nothing separates them other than a single point: sincerity of heart.

If it is possible so to speak, when the Shekhinah sees that they have, God forbid, thrown the Torah of truth to the ground,¹⁵ and remain in the folly in which they began to study and to act, she becomes enraged and complains loudly about the fact that in the beginning she put it into their heart to study not for its own sake. Through this she has been of no help at all; on the contrary, she has brought about a diminution. This is the sense of **"I myself put my maid [in your bosom]"**: that he began to study at all came from me, for I put it into his heart; perhaps he would enter into the true aim. But now **"Why do I live?"** [Gen. 25:22], for now that she sees that she is pregnant, as already noted, **I am lowered in her esteem.** As if it were possible, the Shekhinah and the zaddikim who attach themselves to the truth, the level of **mistress**, are despised and abhorred in his eyes;¹⁶ and through this he brings about **Sarai treated her harshly, and she ran away from her.** In other words, the Shekhinah, if it can be said, afflicts and humiliates that person who attaches himself to the level of **maid.** **And she**

ran away from her, one must say, refers to the Shekhinah and the Torah, as if it were possible: she flees from him and causes him to forget what he has learned, as in several occurrences about which I have heard among people such as these, whose Torah was completely forgotten and bore no fruit at all. However, those who fear YHVH will be honored;¹⁷ that is, those who study a little with kavvanah, for its own sake, will go on and grow and bear fruit. They will grow higher and higher, unto the fullness of their truth and of their Torah, the Torah of truth.

When [the arrogant one] sees this and recognizes the truth, and by this means returns with all his heart and all his soul to God, this is that which the text states: **Return to your mistress:** he should again be engaged in Torah for its own sake, the level of **mistress**, and not for any pleasurable aspect, and he will greatly esteem those zaddikim who study little with kavvanah, for a little with kavvanah is better [than much without kavvanah].¹⁸ This is the meaning of **submit to her harsh treatment:** he humbles himself before the zaddikim. Then the angel of the Lord said to her, "I will greatly increase your offspring." In other words, he will be fruitful in his Torah, the Torah of truth, and raise up his study which is not for its own sake, as mentioned earlier. Therefore the well was called Be'er la-hai ro'i: he will merit, through studying the Torah for its own sake, becoming like an unceasing spring, and like a well of living

water, as the Sages have said.¹⁹ And it is on account of laḥai ro'i that he brings about "I keep YHVH always before me" [Psalm 16:8]: he constantly sees (ro'eh) before his eyes that he is standing before the Life of (Hei) the worlds. Understand this.

YHVH appeared to him by the terebinths of Mamre; he was sitting at the entrance of the tent in the heat of the day.

(Va-Yera, Genesis 18:1)²¹

Alternatively, in answer to the difficulty posed by the 'Or ha-Ḥayyim,²² one could say that the Torah intentionally changed [its] mode of expression here, to allude to a profound matter. For it sometimes happens that the zaddik sits among a number of people and speaks with them some worldly words and stories, which seemingly are idle words. But in truth the thought of that zaddik who sits [there] is attached to God; and even though for them the words which he speaks are worldly and idle words, therein he thinks and sees spiritual things, holy words. Similarly, in regard to all the stories of the world which they tell before him and speak about with him, in all matters, in those utterances he always sees holy concerns. And I heard from my master, my grandfather, may he rest in Eden, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come: What if the nations of the

world sing lieder? In all of them are the aspects of awe and love, in the expansion from above to below throughout all the lower levels.

It should be explained that this is what is hinted in the verse, **YHVH appeared to him by the terebinths of Mamre.** **Terebinths** refers to people, following [Deuteronomy 20:19]: "Is the tree of the field man?" And **Mamre** is an expression for one who is defiant and rebellious.²³ In other words, even among those people who in their speaking offend (mamrim) against God, may He be blessed -- those who are evil-- nevertheless, **He appeared to him**, precisely to the zaddik who is constantly attached to God. He continually sees God, may He be blessed, in those matters; but it is only **to him**, and not to them; for he is one. **He was sitting:** in other words, even though he sits with them as one of them, in any case, **he** grammatically is nistar, for he is secretly and in a concealed way in the world of thought.²⁴ As stated in the holy Zohar [1:98a], **the entrance of the tent** is awe.²⁵ In other words, [the zaddik's insight occurs] because he is continuously joined to the fear of God.

In the heat of the day: like the heat of the sun which warms the day, and is therefore called **heat of the day**, there are two sides to this. For example, if a person spreads linen out in the sun to bleach it, by means of the heat it turns white; but the heat of the sun darkens the individual himself. So it is, also, in regard to all words

and matters, in accord with [Hosea 14:10]: "[the paths of the Lord are straight,] the righteous walk in them [but sinners stumble in them]." That is, the offender and the one who is evil "stumble in them," because they transgress [the commandment] "you shall talk of them" and not of idle matters.²⁶ However, the zaddikim "walk in them": in those words, they actually are speaking within the Torah and the service of God, may He be blessed, for their thought is constantly attached to their root and source. For them, this is a whitening, following "[Be your sins like crimson,] they can turn snow white" [Isaiah 1:18]: they draw down upon them the attribute of hesed, the aspect of whitening. But those who are evil are darkened, for they draw judgment upon themselves, Gevurah, colored black.²⁷ But for the zaddikim it is the reverse, as has already been said. Understand this.

I came today to the spring . . .

(Hayyei Sarah, Genesis 24:42)²⁸

Rabbi Aha said, "The conversation of the fathers' servants is more worthy before God than the Torah of their descendants" [Bereshit Rabba 60:8].

This should be explained as an allusion; for it is known that every child of Israel has to believe, with

complete faith, that the Blessed Holy One continually renews the creation, each day. Furthermore, it is known that the beginning of the world's creation, being from nothing, was by means of the holy Torah. As it is written [Genesis 1:1]: "In the beginning" -- meaning with the Torah, which is called "beginning" -- "God created the heavens [and the earth]." In other words, with the Torah God, may He be blessed, created everything -- heaven and all that is in it, earth and everything upon it. This accounts for the duplication of the two ets: everything was created with the Torah.²⁹ Therefore, it must be that the Blessed Holy One's renewal, day-by-day, of that which He created during the six days of creation is also by means of the Torah. That is, by means of daily renewing the Torah, the Blessed Holy One renews the creation each day.

Now, the whole world was created only for the sake of Israel; and the renewing of the world is also dependent on Israel, whose practice follows the Torah, both through their fulfilling the mizvot of the Torah, and through Torah study.³⁰ [In this regard] there are many levels, for "the one high up is watched by a higher, and there are yet higher ones over them" [Kohelet 5:7]. As is the intention and character of their study of the Torah and their performance of its mizvot, so is the renewal of the world which they arouse through their action, both in mizvot and study. For example, if in their exertion in the Torah they attach themselves to the

attribute of hesed, love, then they bring about through the letters a renewal of the world also in great love, may His name be blessed, which causes divine abundance and blessing to flow forth upon all the world according to the quality of His goodness and His love. And so forth: by means of their renewal of Torah, the world is renewed day by day.³¹

It is God, may He be blessed, who knows the truth concerning what renewal will be made each day. He sends [it] into the thought of the zaddik to make those innovations of Torah which are necessary for the renewals of that day. For times are not the same [Mishnah Tamid 1:2], and one day is not like another; but he is the one who renews the Torah based on the truth. However, meriting this rung requires very prodigious endeavor; and it is only a few of the few who attain this level, to come to the truth of the renewals of the Torah needed at that time -- only one who is a zaddik, world foundation, upon whom depends the entire existence of the world.³² The Blessed Holy One grants him the right to enter into the truth of the innovation of Torah which are needed for the renewing of the world at that moment.

It should be explained that it is this which Abraham's servant intimates to us in his lucid language, **I came today to the spring:** I was worthy to come this day, at that moment, **to the spring**, that is, to that Torah which is the flowing source of living water required at that moment. God, may He be blessed, made me worthy to attain to that truth of

the Torah, as previously mentioned. When Rabbi Aha saw in the words of Abraham's servant, how through his story he intimated that he had also merited a great level, he said, "The conversation of the fathers' servants is more worthy. . . . " Understand this well.

Or in these words, "The conversation of the fathers' servants is more worthy before God than the Torah of the sons," it might be hinted that there is proof that the conversation of the fathers' servants is worthwhile in God's eyes; and the evidence is "from the Torah of the sons."³³ That is, we see that God, may He be blessed, made a Torah for his beloved sons out of the stories in [the servant's] words, and this is written in His Torah "before Him"; from his stories the holy Torah was formed. From this it is proved that the conversation [of the fathers' servants] is worthwhile before God, may He be blessed.³⁴ Understand this.

The children struggled in her womb and she said, "If so, why do I exist?" And she went to inquire of YHVH, and YHVH answered her, "Two nations are in your womb, two peoples shall be separated from your belly; one people shall be mightier than the other, and the older shall serve the younger."

(Toledot, Genesis 25:22-23)³⁵

It is important to explain that in this passage the Torah is intimating to us an important lesson in that which is known to us, namely, that there are two inclinations in a person, the good urge and the evil urge. The purpose of the creation of humankind with two inclinations was that the individual might strive to make the evil urge into the good urge -- that is, to serve God, may He be blessed, in all matters which proceed from the evil urge according to the Sages' saying [Mishnah Avot 4:1]: "Who is wise? One who learns from everyone," [about which] it is stated in the books of the holy Rabbi of Polnoyye, even from the evil urge.³⁶

It is known that "the one opposite the other was God's doing" [Ecclesiastes 7:14]. That is, there are people who, God forbid, convert their good urge into an evil urge; when God, may He be blessed, purifies and grants knowledge to those people and they reflect on their deeds, in which there is no value, they are amazed at themselves. Once, they had been able to serve God, blessed be He, when the good urge had prevailed within them, but now even the good urge becomes an evil urge. [Such a person] says, If **so, why** did I come into the world? For I am of no use at all; on the contrary, I have made my deeds evil." Having come to this knowledge, he then begins to carefully seek and inquire³⁷ and search for the true nature of His service, may His name be blessed.

Then God answers him through a messenger, that is, by means of His beloved, the trusted one of His house.³⁸ This should not be astonishing to him, for actually he has never yet at any time served the Creator, blessed be He. What had appeared to him at times as his serving God in awe and love was false; it contained pride, and he had not yet [made anything real in attempting His service, may His name be blessed. That is, it [i.e. his effort] has been mixed--good with evil, and evil with good -- and he has not made an effort to effect distinction and separation between evil and good. For this is the fundamental aim: to be separated from evil, and from evil to make good. As it is written, "Turn from evil and do good" [Psalm 34:15]: strive to remove from evil the evil that is in it, and to make it entirely good.³⁹ Then the evil urge will be subjugated to holiness, and it will be possible to serve God, may He be blessed, even in matters deriving from the evil urge.

It should be explained that this is what is alluded to in the verses mentioned above. **The children struggled (va-yitrozezu) in her womb** suggests "crushing" (rizuz) and "breaking": The two inclinations within the individual are constantly crushing and shattering each other. At times the good urge prevails, and the evil urge becomes very docile before it; but at times the opposite [occurs], God forbid, from which it comes about that one's good urge is completely turned into the evil urge. **And she said, "If so, why do I**

may He be blessed, grants one knowledge so that he sees that there is no value in his actions, [he says,] "If ~~so~~, why did I go forth into this world?" And he yearns with great desire and passion to know the basic purpose, the truth of human-kind, and how he can serve God, may He be blessed, continuously, without confusion and distraction. Out of this awakening, **she went to inquire of ('et)**: that is, he goes to search and to ask one who is wise, who is with ('et) God, for they are constantly around Him, may He be blessed. As it is written: "Revere the Lord ('et YHVH) your God" [Deuteronomy 6:13], which the Sages interpreted to include the wise [Baba Kama 41b].⁴⁰ Then, when one searches well, inquiring and seeking with all his heart, and with all his strength and desire, **YHVH answered her**: God, may He be blessed, answers the soul, from whom this awakening comes; and He answers her by means of a messenger, as Rashi has explained, that is, through the zaddik mentioned above. **Two nations (goyim) are in your womb**; but Rashi explains, "goyim is written, like 'proud ones' (ge'im) . . ." ⁴¹: in other words, this is because the beginning of your thought was solely in pride. This is also the sense of **your womb**, which expresses pregnancy on account of the thought:⁴² that is, at the beginning of your service of God, may He be blessed, not once was it done in completeness, but only in pride, and with ulterior motives and deceptions. Therefore, the evil urge has power to overcome yet again, and so it will remain forever, God

forbid; the good urge subjugated to it, like those people who change their good inclination into evil inclination, as has already been said. However, the basic aim is **Two peoples shall be separated from your belly:** that you will take care to completely separate the evil from the good and be completely apart from the evil, so that there be no admixture of evil in the good. **One people shall be mightier than the other:** exert yourself so that one of the two inclinations is always mightier than its fellow. And the verse returns to explain which one should be mightier: **the older**, that is, the evil urge, called "older" because it comes before the good inclination, **shall serve the younger:** it should be completely subjugated to the good inclination, called **the younger** -- "Better is a poor and wise youth [than an old and foolish king]" [Kohelet 4:13].⁴³ Thus you will be able to serve God, may He be blessed, truly and with a whole heart, in complete perfection, with no confusion or distraction but by virtue of knowledge (Da'at). Understand this.

There was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold, God's angels were ascending and descending on it.

(Va-Yeze, Genesis 28:12)⁴⁴

This must be interpreted allegorically.

It is known that the intention of giving zedekah, charitable donations, is to bring about the union of YHVH and Adonai, and that through this unification, one activates the descent of the divine abundance upon all the worlds.⁴⁵

This is what the Torah hints at here. The author of the Turim explained that ladder, sulam, in gematria equals mamon, money; and this is what this passage means: **A ladder -- that is, money⁴⁶ -- set up on the earth --** appears, in other words, to be at a very low level, completely without effect. However, in reality, **the top of it reaches to heaven:** in other words, it has a great effect, touching heaven. And thus: **behold, God's angels:** angel, malakh, in gematria is 91, which equals the union of YHVH and Adonai.⁴⁷ By means of giving money in zedekah, the union of YHVH and Adonai, equalling 91, is brought about. By this **ascending** is activated. That is, at first they go up by means of arousal from below; but afterwards **they descend upon it.** Through the one who gives, abundance and blessing descend upon all the worlds. Understand this.

**Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely
YHVH is in this place, and I did not know it!
 (Va-Yeze, Genesis 28:16)⁴⁸**

Rashi interprets: "If I had known I would not have slept."⁴⁹ [Interpret] in accord with what has already been said, namely that the exile is compared to a dream, as it is written "We were like dreamers" [Psalm 126:1]. It is as during sleep: one sees in a dream imaginary things which are false, for a dream is something imagined and not true. So it is with the exile in general: it is like sleep and a dream, in which one does not know the truth nor the true purpose. It consists solely of fancied things which seem to be true to each individual. And such is appointed for one who serves Him, may his name be blessed. But the redemption is [the state] in which God will enlighten eyes, so that everyone will see what the complete truth is, and they will come out of the exile, which is falsehood.⁵⁰

It is the same in particular with each and every individual, in the mystery of "Come near to my soul and redeem her" [Psalm 69:19]. Like the semblance of the dream, when, God forbid, one is sunk in falsehood, he is in exile, which is like sleep and dreaming. But when God, may He be blessed, aids him, and he cleanses his ideas and his thoughts in holiness and purity so that his thought will not roam to anything other than God alone, and he enters within the fence of the truth, then he attains to the sphere of YHVH, blessed be He, a mirror of brightness in pure and shining light,

without any admixture.⁵¹ All of his dreams are true, all that he sees is true, and all that is true he sees; and this is because he has come out of exile and out of falsehood. All of his actions are [done] solely for the truth they contain.

It should be explained that this is what is intimated in the verse. **Jacob awoke from his sleep** suggests that when God aids him, he awakes from sleep and falsehood and attains the level of truth following [Micah 7:20]: "You will give faithfulness to Jacob." Then **he said, "Surely YHVH is in this place"**, for he attains to YHVH, the mirror of light, as mentioned above, **"and I did not know"** of this! That is, [I did not know] that a great level of truth such as this exists, for "if I had known I would not have slept." If I had already known of this rung, I would not have slept: I would never have fallen to the level of sleep and falsehood at all, except that I did not yet know of this, the truth, etc. The whole matter will become clear in this way; and let one who is enlightened understand, for I have abbreviated this.

With my staff alone I crossed this Jordan.

(Va-Yishlah, Genesis 32:11)⁵²

One should further explain this along the lines of that which my master, my grandfather, whose soul is in Paradise, his memory a blessing for the life of the world to come, related: Once he crossed the river Nestor without [using] any name; instead, he laid down his belt, and crossed upon it. And he said that it was with great faith that he crossed. It should be said that it is this to which our ancestor Jacob, may he rest in peace, alluded: **with my staff** in gematria equals "Jacob" -- in other words [he crossed] with his name, which was Jacob, the attribute of truth, referring to the greatness of his faith.⁵³ With this I **crossed the Jordan**. Understand this.

"Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau."

(Va-Yishlah, Genesis 32:12)⁵⁴

This should be interpreted in accord with that stated in the Midrash [Yalkut Shimoni, Obadiah 1:4]: In the time to come, Essau will wrap himself in zizit and sit among the zaddikim, and the Blessed Holy One will pull him down from there, etc.⁵⁵ Look there. It is important to say that this is also common in this world because of our many sins; for falsehood has increased in the world, and every one wants to ascend to the level of the completely faithful in Israel. He

sees that they are dressed in white clothing on the Sabbath and wear a tallit on the eve of the Sabbath during Minhah, and says, "I can surely be like them."

It is this which is more difficult than all else, for this causes the lengthiness of the exile: they are called a mixed multitude ('erev-rav), for they are mixed in among Israel and it is difficult to separate them.⁵⁶ Like wheat: the chaff and straw which is not all that stuck to the wheat is dispersed easily; but the refuse that is in the wheat is attached and it is hard to remove it. "Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother" alludes to this: he is intermixed with, and attached to, me; "from the hand of Esau"--nevertheless, he is Esau.⁵⁷ And this is easy to understand.

**Now Jacob was settled in the land where his
father had resided, the land of Canaan.**
(Va-Yeshev, Genesis 37:1)⁵⁸

Or one might speak following that which has been already mentioned; but there is no interpretation without innovation, for it is certainly known by anyone with a brain in his head that the Torah is eternal.⁵⁹ As mentioned several times in the holy Zohar [e.g. 3:156a], woe to them who say that the Torah contains only stories and literal meaning; they are called heretics. For the Torah is like its name: it is called Torah in accordance with le-horot,

showing us "the way we should go and the practices that we should follow." Thus is it explained in the verse [Jeremiah 42:3].

This follows from the parable I heard from my teacher and master, my grandfather, his soul rests in Paradise, his memory a blessing for the life of the world to come, of robbers who resided in a particular forest. From there they continually sent out a man to entice anyone to go there so that they could kill him and take his money. But "one who is wise has eyes in his head" [Kohelet 2:14] and does not want to go there. This is also the "the way we should go": the straight path, not following the tempting of the evil inclination, which entices the individual in order to destroy him, as in the mentioned parable. "And the practices (ma'aseh) that they should follow"⁶⁰ means even the stories (ma'asiyot) that are in the Torah, which they also should follow forever, for the words live and last forever.

Certainly this event of Jacob's settlement and all that happens to him allude to deep and wondrous mysteries. I have already explained that **had resided** expresses unification:⁶¹ he brought about yihudim for the Shekhinah, if such a thing can be said. And this is the sense of **the land of Canaan**: the Shekhinah is called "land", but she is also called "Canaan", for it also suggests lowliness and submission (hakhna'ah). For the Shekhinah, as if it were possible, subjects herself to all the low and base levels,

even to one who transgresses, God forbid, and enjoys the transgression: if the vitality of the Shekhinah had not been in him, he would not have sinned and would not have relished the offense. This is as suggested by [Psalm 103:19], "His kingdom (malkhut) rules in every thing." Or one could say that she is called Canaan because she subjugates (makhna'at) all the shells and destroys all the accusers.⁶² Or one could say that **had resided** expresses awe, as mentioned previously.⁶³ Thus the meaning of **Jacob was settled in the land where his father had resided** is that he connected himself to the attribute of his father, which is awe, "the Fear of Isaac" [Gen. 31:42].

After two years' time, Pharaoh dreamed . . .
 (Mi-Kez, Genesis 41:1)⁶⁴

There are many detailed points here: **two years' time** (shenatayim yamim) has no clear explanation; in addition, it would have been more proper to say "Pharaoh dreamed" [using the converted imperfect form].⁶⁵ In my humble opinion, that which God has granted me in his compassion and great love seems to be the case, [namely] that there is a wondrous mystery in this. For I received from my master teacher and grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, that from malkhut being without union with her

husband, God forbid, all evils come. But when Malkhut is united with the Blessed Holy One, there come all good things and divine influxes -- bounty, livelihood, life, and peace. All the accusers are completely abolished, the prosecutor becomes the counsel for the defense, and against his will the angel of evil answers "Amen."⁶⁶

It is known that the attributes are called days, as it is stated: "Six days YHVH made [heaven and earth]" [Exodus 20:11]: what is said is not "in six," but "six". The Blessed Holy One is called a day, including all the days and attributes; and, moreover, "year" in gematria is equivalent to sefirah.⁶⁷

And it should be said that it is to this which the passage alludes: **After two years'** refers to that one which is the last of all the sefirot, malkhut; and **time** (yamim) suggests that when it is united with the attributes and God, may He be blessed, it is surely a time of favor. The prosecutor becomes a defender, and all good things come to the world, with healing, livelihood, blessing, life, and peace; and all kinds of goodness hasten to come because the accuser has become counsel for the defense. It is this which **Pharaoh** suggests: its letters spell "the mouth of evil", which is the accuser.⁶⁸ **Dreamed** (holem) has the same letters as "having pity" (homel). In other words, he [Pharaoh] himself has pity on Israel and speaks on their behalf. So may it be, upon us and all Israel. Amen.

And behold, seven ears of corn came up on one stalk.

(Mi-Kez, Genesis 41:5)⁶⁹

This passage contains the secret of the sweetening of the forces of judgment at their root. For it is known that the root of all forces of judgment (dinim) is in Binah, for from her the dinim awaken; and when the forces of judgment are elevated to their root, which is the world of Binah, there they all are sweetened.

But it is important to explain the matter; for it is known that the forces of judgment are in the mystery of the 39 kinds of labor, and opposite these are the 39 curses.⁷⁰ In other words, each kind of work is a limitation (zimzum), because before one performs that work, his thought expands into a number of matters; but when he does any particular item of labor, then he limits his thought entirely within that one thing. This can serve as an example. The secret is that forces of judgment are drawn forth when one falls to the level of limitation, for every limitation is judgment (din), as is known. But when the forces of judgment are raised up to the world of Binah, that is, to the world of thought, there no separation exists, for there all of the seven sefirot are included and united, and there is not the least division of them into the entities hesed, gevurah, etc. Instead, all are included and united as one, because one leaves limitation, which is the world of separation, and

enters the world of Binah, which is the world of thought; and thought is without end ('ein sof). Therefore all the forces of judgment are sweetened there.⁷¹

It should be said that this is hinted in the verse. **Behold, seven ears of corn -- seven ears**, which are the seven days of construction by which one must ascend -- **came up**: they have an ascent **on a stalk** (kaneh). In other words, when they are raised up to kaneh, namely "Keneh, acquire wisdom, get understanding (Binah)" [Proverbs 4:5], which are the moḥin, then they have ascent.⁷² That is **one**: because there all are included and united as one, and there is no division at all. There "all evildoers are scattered" [Psalm 92:10], and all the forces of judgment are sweetened. Understand this well.

For Hanukkah⁷³

It is stated in Sefer Yosifon, in the story concerning the miracle of the Hasmoneans' overcoming the evil rule of Greece, that the miracle also came about because of Judah Maccabi. And it is stated there that he was called Maccabi because while fighting battles he was in the habit of saying, "Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods," the first letters of which spell Maccabi. Look there.⁷⁴ Now this is a verse from the Torah: "Who is like You, O Lord, among the

gods; who is like You, majestic in holiness" [Exodus 15:11]. In my humble opinion, it should be explained that the miracle of the oil that burned for eight days happened accordingly. For oil is the aspect of wisdom; as it is written, "a holy anointing oil" [Exodus 30:25], and holiness is wisdom, as is known.⁷⁵ The miracle was like a triumph in war, for he was continuously calling out this verse, "Who is like You, O Lord, among the Gods; Who is like You, majestic in holiness." And the miracle also occurred with a thing which is the aspect of holiness. Understand this.

Joseph gathered up all the money that was to be found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, for the corn which they bought; and Joseph brought the money to Pharaoh's house.

(Va-Yiggash, Genesis 47:14)⁷⁶

There is a marvelous hint in this, in accord with that which I received from my fathers, may their memories be a blessing for the life of the world to come, and in accord with that which God granted me in His compassion and great love. For from my master, my grandfather, whose soul rests in Paradise, his memory a blessing for the life of the world to come, it is known that the lusts and strange thoughts which come to an individual, God forbid, [come] on account of the attribute of hesed which has fallen. When the individual

considers this when these evil desires come to him, may the Merciful One save us, and becomes afraid and trembles that the holy hesed on which all the worlds depend, in His great love, should be brought to a place as low and awful as this, into animal desires [and] actual animal behavior -- when he comes to fear, and has pity that such a valuable thing should be brought into such low value -- then, through this, he raises this quality up to its root, and brings supernal hesed upon himself and upon all the world. He arouses hesed and compassion by having compassion on God's hesed, and brings about love and compassion filling His glory, the Shekhinah, as it were.⁷⁷

There is a level even greater than this: when one sees others, sinners who are drawn after harlotry, God forbid, and considers that their lustful desires come because of the great hesed which has fallen into the depths of the shells, may the Merciful One save us; and fears and is anxious concerning this, taking pity and having compassion on God's hesed -- such a precious and holy attribute, which has fallen to extreme lowliness, diminution, and sin, as already mentioned -- he also acts so that hesed will be raised to its root, and [so] brings about love and compassion -- and all the earth -- full of His glory.⁷⁸ Amen. Understand this.

It is this, one should note, to which the passage alludes: **Joseph gathered up** refers to the zaddik⁷⁹ who collects **all the money**, kesef, an expression of desire, as in

the verse "I long (nikhsefah), I yearn [for the courts of YHVH]" [Psalm 84:3]. In other words, [he gathers up] the licentious desires, God forbid, which are **Egypt**, the root of all debauchery, for Egypt is called "the nakedness of the land" [Genesis 42:9].

The land of Canaan is also the root of all the evil and strange desires of the aspect Hesed; the proof being that when God, may He be blessed, warned about nakedness, He said, "[You shall not copy] the practices of the land of Egypt . . . or of the land of Canaan" [Leviticus 18:3]. Undoubtedly, then, it is apparent and known to the One who knows all and creates all, that in these countries lies the root of all the strange desires, and that there is the resting place of Lilith, may the Merciful One save us. This is what is said: the zaddik, who is the aspect **Joseph**, gathers up **all** the desires coming from **the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan**, both in regard to himself and in regard to others, **for the corn which they bought** (shoverim). In other words, by being afraid and anxious and having pity concerning the fact that they are shattering (shoverim) Hesed, and that, because of the breaking of the attribute of Hesed which has fallen from its root, bringing them lustful desire, they are engaging in animal practices and even further destroying it -- through being afraid and concerned about this -- he **brought the money**, that is, the desires which are the quality of hesed, **to Pharaoh's house**. **Pharaoh** is numerically equivalent to

sefirah; in other words, he brings it [hesed] near its root, and it becomes a sefirah like all the other sefirot and is raised up from the depths of the shells. This is what is meant by [the saying], A hasid is one who performs hesed with his creator.⁸⁰ He thereby brings forth the forces of hesed and compassion upon himself and upon all the world. May it be His will that it be so for us and for all Israel. Amen.

Now Israel's eyes were dim with age; he could not see. So he [Joseph] brought ~~them~~ close to him, and he embraced them and kissed them.
 . . . And he put Ephraim before Manasseh.

(Va-Yehi, Genesis 48:10,20)⁸¹

The 'Or ha-Hayyim raises the difficulty that it would have been more proper to say "he embraced them and kissed them" [using the direct object 'otam, "them," rather than la-hem, "to them"]. He explained that because his eyes were dim with age, he had embraced where it was not the place for embracing, and kissed a place other than that for kissing, and because of this it said la-hem and not 'otam. His words end here.

In my humble opinion, one should explain this matter using the mode of allusion, that with which God has graced me in his compassion and great love, according to the teaching of the holy books of the great Kohen [Ya'akov Yosef]: Israel's eyes are the zaddikim, who are the eyes of the

generation, because they watch over and constantly pay attention to all the actions of that generation, so that it not commit, God forbid, any injustice or breach. If the zaddik sees a certain wrong in what they do, then he reproves them to their face to cause them to return to the better way.⁸² To this point [extend his words].

It should be explained that it is this which is alluded to here in the verse. **Israel's eyes**, referring to the zaddikim and the wise, who are the eyes of Israel, **were dim with age**: they had become dim from observing the deeds of Israel.⁸³ **With age** means that, because their evil deeds have become very "old", and they have become so accustomed to them that it seems to them like a license, it is therefore totally impossible to rebuke them concerning their behavior, for it appears [to any one of them] that he has done no wrong, God forbid, but is an absolute zaddik. Even though he does all the evil things, in his eyes this is not considered an evil thing at all; because of habit it becomes natural. Therefore **He could not see**: it is impossible to bear, to endure, and to see what they do, out of sheer brokenness of heart; for they [the zaddikim] see that the people are acting with so little restraint, but that in their eyes they do no evil, God forbid, but are all flawless zaddikim, and it is impossible to chastise them. Nevertheless, **He brought them close to him**: in other words, though their evil deeds are very hard for the zaddik, he still brings them near to him,

thinking, "Your people are all zaddikim: even the sinners of Israel are full of mizvot, like a pomegranate."⁸⁴ And he **embraced them** also expresses drawing near, in that they are embraced in his arms: that is, he brings near those who want to become close to the zaddik through all kinds of close contact and affection, and even more than this -- He **kissed them**: joining and the union of spirit with spirit [Zohar 2:124b].

To suggest this it is also proper that [the verse] did not say 'otam according to the answer of the 'Or ha-Hayyim. In truth, this drawing near cannot be in the place where drawing near [should be], because he [the zaddik] is not pleased by their actions. In particular, it is impossible that there be union and attachment of spirit to spirit as is fitting, for how can the soul of one who is righteous connect with the soul of one doing evil? They are two opposites. Nevertheless, he brings them close, but the closeness is not in the proper and true place, as it would be if they improved their behavior.

And he put Ephraim before Manasseh: for Israel has these two aspects, Ephraim and Manasseh. Regarding [Manasseh, Joseph said,] "'for God has made me forget'" [Genesis 41:51], expressing obliviousness: they forget God, glorified and full of awe, in the evil things that they do. But **Ephraim** is the language of "Be fertile and increase" [Gen. 35:11]:⁸⁵ that is, nonetheless they are full of mizvot [like

a pomegranate]. It is this that the passage has intimated. The zaddik brings very close even all those who are evil, and he places that good aspect of Ephraim that is in them as the essential and primary thing, before the evil aspect within them which is Manasseh. "For Manasseh was the first born" [48:14]: actually, Manasseh, that is, the aspect of evil that is in them, is the chief thing, and increasingly overcomes them; but in any case the zaddik pleads Israel's cause, as has already been mentioned.⁸⁶ It should be explained that this is also a reason that "Manasseh was the first born"; for this is what the zaddik says: the fact that they forget God is at first and in the beginning; but later they are reminded of God and very much regret what they have done, and they take it upon themselves to improve their behavior once more. For this is the way of the zaddik, to continually plead for favor for Israel, the holy people, and to draw them close with two hands in love and affection. "May one who is wise hear and increase in learning [Proverbs 1:5]" in this instructive lesson, which always applies, especially in our day, for "the Torah of the Lord is perfect . . . abiding forever" [Psalm 19:8-10].

An angel of YHWH appeared to him in a blaze of fire out of the midst of a bush. . . . Moses said, "I will turn aside and see this great sight; why does the bush not burn?"

When YHVH saw that he had turned aside to look, God called to him out of the bush. . . . And He said, ". . . Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you stand is holy ground." And He said, "I am . . . the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

(Shemot, Exodus 3:2-6)⁸⁷

Regarding this, it is important to explain that which God, in his compassion and great love, granted me in my youth, in accord with what I heard from my master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come: the strange thoughts that come to a person in the midst of prayer [come] in order that one may mend and raise up the holy sparks, which are clothed in those thoughts; and it is necessary to know how to elevate them and to attach them to their root. For example, if evil thoughts of fornication come to one, God forbid, he should understand that they are from the root of the great Hesed which has fallen from its root in its effusion from above down to the very lowest levels. One should raise it up and attach it to its root, which is supernal Hesed. Similarly, if thoughts of any dread or external fear come, one should attach himself to the root which is the highest awe, root of all fear. Likewise, when any arrogance and boasting break into one's thoughts, he should join himself to the attribute of Tif'eret, in which is the root of all boasting.⁸⁸ Understand this.

It should be explained that this is alluded to here in the verse, for a **bush** refers to strange and evil thoughts, along the lines of "thorns cut down" [Isaiah 33:12], which alludes to evil people and shells, and strange and evil thoughts, evil and wicked imaginings.⁸⁹ It is this that the text says: **An angel of YHVH appeared to him in a blaze of fire out of the midst of a bush:** in the midst of his worship, in an enthusiasm of fire and with great devekut, the **bush**, which is the strange thought, as already mentioned, comes to him. And **Moses said, "I will turn aside"**, that is, I will clear my thoughts and turn aside every disturbing thing, and see . . . **why does the bush not burn?** He was extremely surprised. How could any strange thought come at all close to him, to stop him from his service? For it should have been the case that all shells and all strange thoughts would have been burned and destroyed by the breath of his holy mouth and by his enthusiasm and the strength of his attachment to God, may He be blessed. **When YHVH saw that he had turned aside to look, [to look],** that is, for the greatness of the love and goodness of God, may He be blessed: God immediately saw that he turned aside to look and yearned to know the truth of things. At once He became visible and was revealed to him **out of** those same strange thoughts. This is the sense of **God called to him out of the bush.** And He revealed this secret to him: **Remove your sandals from your feet:** in other words, that he take care to turn aside the

evil from those thoughts, and to bring them to the sphere of goodness and attach them to their root.⁹⁰

For the place on which you stand is holy ground suggests that, in fact, you are the one standing in a holy place and on a holy rung, and your prayer is holy. And the fact that strange thoughts come to you in the middle of prayer is **I am the God of your father ('avikha)**, an expression of desire, as in [the piyyut which reads] "You desire ('avita) praise": because of the aspect of divinity which is in those desires and thoughts that come to you -- that is, the holy sparks which have fallen from their root and desire and long for [you] to mend them and to raise them up to their root -- they are thrust upon you in prayer and service.⁹¹ In this regard there are a number of levels. There is **the God of Abraham**, thoughts which come from the root of Hesed, the attribute of Abraham, and the divine aspect in them desires its root. And there is **the God of Isaac**, thoughts from the sphere of Gevurah, which is awe and fear, the aspect of Isaac; one has to raise it up to the root of supernal awe. **The God of Jacob:** from the attribute Tif'eret come boasting and arrogance. But all of this [occurs] in order to elevate them to their root, and not to prevent you, God forbid, from prayer. Understand this.

Moreover, I have heard the moaning of the Israelites because the Egyptians are holding them in bondage [and I have remembered My covenant].

(Va-'Era, Exodus 6:5)⁹²

One should explain further that the Torah was given in order continuously to be interpreted according to the concern of the generation's leaders, whose aspect and level accords with their generation. As I saw in a book -- and it appears to me that it was the book Berit Menuḥah -- the four-letter name of God is handed down for each generation to interpret it in accordance with that generation and its needs. And it is known that the entire Torah is the names of the Blessed Holy One. Thus certainly it also is interpreted in each and every generation in accord with the interpreters and the soul of that generation.⁹³

Now, in the generations before ours, in the days of my master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, in my humble opinion, the explanation of the passage was expounded in this manner, following that which is known from what he revealed to us: The zaddikim are those who are messengers of the Matronita, meaning, as if it were possible, "In all their troubles He was troubled" [Isaiah 63:9].⁹⁴ In other words, when one has any trouble or suffering, God forbid, let him understand that surely He is troubled by this distress, as if it were

possible, and this lack is in the Shekhinah. But from this [suffering], people did not know to pray for her. Therefore God, may He be blessed, sends that misfortune or loss upon the zaddik, so that he will know to pray concerning the lack of the Shekhinah, if such can be said; and when her want is filled, his lack is filled also. This is the meaning of "The zaddikim are those who are messengers of the Matronita." His holy words end here.

According to these words, one should give the following explanation of the passage, **I have heard the moaning:** the letters of **moaning** (na'akat) are an abbreviation of "O God, pray bring deliverance near," for it is known that the Shekhinah is called deliverance. It is this which they cry out concerning the Shekhinah, as if it were possible, to bring near the Shekhinah, called deliverance, for she is removed and in separation, if such can be said. This is the sense of **because the Egyptians are holding them in bondage:** when they have things that distress them (mazirim) in the physical realm, they see that, as if it were possible, He is surely troubled in a way similar to this; that the Shekhinah has fallen, as it were, into the depths of the shells called Egypt (mizrayim). Thus their plea is to fill her lack. Then, **I have heard their cry, and I have remembered my covenant,** that is, the Shekhinah.⁹⁵

Thus was the passage interpreted, in my humble opinion, in the days of the Ba'al Shem, may his memory be a

blessing for the life of the world to come, and the people of his generation, who were at this level, not praying in the least for their own want but for the lack of the Shekhinah, as if it were possible, as already mentioned. But now, in my humble opinion, this verse is interpreted in accord with our era, as follows.

In accord with what has already been said, the first letters of **moaning** are an abbreviation of "O God, pray bring deliverance near." But this means merely the deliverance of each person in accord with that which he needs. That itself is the plea, **because the Egyptians are holding them in bondage**, and they cry out concerning themselves. Even so, in the greatness of God's compassion and love, for He is compassion within compassion, He receives even prayer and pleading for themselves, and says, **Moreover, I have heard** (ve-gam 'ani shama'ti). Seemingly, He should have said **I have heard** [without 'ani]: the word 'ani seems superfluous. However, in my humble opinion, the meaning should be explained as follows: Even though they do not hear, and do not at all understand this, and are not at this level of never praying for themselves but for the holy Shekhinah, **I have heard** this. As it is stated, all the feelings within a person are felt by his life force; and [this] life force is from the root of the life of all that lives. And I ['ani, i.e., God] hear and feel, as if it were possible, the suffering of the holy Shekhinah.⁹⁶ Thus, **I have remembered**

My covenant, which is the Shekhinah, as it were; and necessarily all their physical want will be filled as well, as mentioned above. One who is enlightened will understand.

The children of Israel went forth with a high hand.

(Be-Shallah, Exodus 14:8)⁹⁷

[The Targum's translation,] "with head (resh) uncovered" could also be rendered "with song (shir) revealed."⁹⁸ That is, when it will be revealed that they will be able to utter song before God, may He be blessed, like our teacher Moses, may he rest in peace, and the other zaddikim who have sung, then **the children of Israel went forth** from exile. Understand this.

**They said to one another, "It is manna"--
for they did not know what it was.**

(Be-Shallah, Exodus 16:15)⁹⁹

Concerning this, we should explain, in the mode of allusion, that with which God graced me in His compassion and great love, along the lines of what my master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, said on the verse "Blessed is he who trusts in

the Lord, whose trust is YHVH alone" [Jer. 17:7]: The substance of his words was that there is the one who trusts (boteah); the one who assures (mavtia); and the assurance (muvta), that reason on the basis of which he trusts. It follows this example. God, may He be blessed, is the One who assures the individual that He will give him all that he needs and enough of what he lacks when he walks in His ways. The individual is the one who trusts this. And the assurance: he trusts that God will certainly provide him his livelihood, but he requires a cause for this [belief], that God, may He be blessed, have a reason, so that by its means he will make a living -- either a trade or some other thing.¹⁰⁰

But a person such as this has not yet reached the fundamental faith; for the essential thing is to believe that He alone is God and there is none other, so that he needs no reason or cause by means of which He will extend one his livelihood. For He is the reason of all reasons and the cause of all causes;¹⁰¹ and even if one puts into effect no cause, and [no] trade, and no preparation for his maintenance, God can provide him his livelihood in His great love. This is the sense of "Blessed is he who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is YHVH alone": his assurance will also be YHVH, for it is only He, "alone," and there is no thing that will be a reason or cause for his livelihood or anything else, by means of which He will complete that which He has

promised him; so that he needs no thing and no preparation in order that there be a cause, and all is only God, may He be blessed. And even when he has the thing by means of a reason, he will believe with complete faith that it is actually God, may He be blessed, who wanted to provide for him in this way, and not that the thing is compelled [to happen] by any cause or preparation other than trusting in God. And this is of the greatest level.

It should be said that this is what is hinted in the verse, **they said to one another, "It is manna":** Man is an expression of preparation, like "YHVH provided (va-yeman) [a great fish]" [Jonah 2:1]. In other words, one needs to prepare, so that there be some reason and cause by which to provide for oneself, **for they did not know what it was** (mah hu'). That is, they had not grasped this rung, to know and believe that He is "what" (mah hu')¹⁰² -- that even the reason and the cause are also He Himself, as if it were possible, God, reason of all reasons and cause of all causes. Mah [in gematria] is also YHVH filled in with alef's¹⁰³: they did not know that the Lord ('alufo) of the world was within that cause, for without Him there is nothing. "The whole earth is full of his glory" [Isaiah 6:3], and there is no place empty of Him. All is from Him, and it is in His power to sustain the individual without any reason or cause at all, for everything is from Him. But, had they known that the Lord ('aluf) of the world was hidden there, it would have

become man with an alef, which are the letters of amen, the true unification, the union of the Blessed Holy One and His Shekhinah.¹⁰⁴ Understand this.

He did not lay His hand on the nobles of the people of Israel; they beheld God, and ate and drank.

(Mishpatim, Ex. 24:11)¹⁰⁵

There is more to say on this passage in a lighter vein. The **nobles** are the youth of the people of Israel, who are explicitly mentioned in the passage, and this alludes to those who are dependent on their father's table several years after the wedding. They don't have a single worry or concern about a livelihood. They are able to attain a great stage in those years, for the Torah is given only to those who ate the manna¹⁰⁶ and to **the nobles of the people of Israel** -- they who are dependent on their father's table and act in truth and uprightness. **He did not lay his hand** that this attainment be hidden from them. Instead, **they beheld God**. That is, they came to that great level of always seeing God before their very eyes.

Now, how were they worthy of this? Because **they ate and drank**, that is, as mentioned above, because they had not a single worry or concern about a livelihood, for food and

drink were always prepared for them.¹⁰⁷ This is easy to understand.

YHVH spoke to Moses, saying: . . . that they take an offering for Me; [from every person whose heart so moves him, you shall take My offering].

(Terumah, Exodus 25:1-2)¹⁰⁸

The upright path which one should take is suggested here: an **offering** is a setting apart.¹⁰⁹ This is the secret of separating the holy and the profane by means of partitions in a person's unifying the Unity and Head of the world, as it is written in the holy Zohar, that during the unification of reciting the Shema', one should separate oneself from any coverings and shells, as in the union of a man and woman, which is by contact in the flesh and not by means of garments. All the more so in the case of the unification of "one", the true union.¹¹⁰ Thus the conclusion is that an individual needs to separate himself from all shells and garments, and to bring about a complete union, without coverings, from 'En Sof, and without end, through self-sacrifice. It turns out that the body is nearly non-existent, for the senses have already ceased, and the soul is united with its supernal root; and all the lower and upper worlds are conjoined. This is the meaning of another thought coming to him, as it is written concerning R. Akiba, when

will it come into my hands so that I can fulfill it?¹¹¹ One draws himself, clear, through all the intellectual worlds, and they go up in the ascent of thought in accord with the one who is cleaving: to whatever place that his attachment might be, his light returns and ascends, turning from darkness into great light. All is in accord with the thought at the time of the recitation of the Shema'. Then, one speaks, and attaches and unites his 248 limbs with the 248 words,¹¹² and draws life and divine bounty into each limb, and to all the world, which is in the likeness of a human being. All the holy sparks go forth and are united; and this is what the Sages meant, that one must recall the exodus from Egypt when reciting the Shema'.¹¹³ Then the true unification is completed in secret, releasing a great flow of abundance and blessings for all the worlds by means of the eighteen blessings.¹¹⁴ For the recitation of the Shema' rouses love, a blazing flame of God, darts of fire in the kisses and cleaving of the spirit to the spirit which is the root of all one's limbs and one's 365 sinews;¹¹⁵ and reality is almost annihilated. . . .

This, then, is the meaning of **that they take an offering for Me**: When you take it, as if it were possible, let **offering** be a setting apart from all shells and from all thoughts -- **from every person**, [that is] from all the pleasures called a person, as previously mentioned.¹¹⁶ **Whose heart so moves him** expresses flowing: the heart flows and is

melted because one is set on fire by the pleasure, like a man and woman, as is known. **You shall take My offering:** from there take my offering, in the mystery of kal va-homer: as there he strips from himself all the many and strange pleasures to enjoy the delight of Sheol, all the more will he do so in regard to a prodigious union such as this. . . .¹¹⁷

**And you shall make the boards for the
tabernacle of acacia wood, standing . . .**
(Terumah, Exodus 26:15)¹¹⁸

One should understand how this applies today -- in extremely abbreviated form.

I received from my master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, that keresh, board, is a human being. Now the way to understand this is that in the letters of the word keresh are the letters of kesher, a link, and this alludes to the human being, who connects all the worlds to each other, and unites them. Therefore, a person must connect himself and his thought continuously to his Creator. In this way the Blessed Holy One and His Shekhinah become connected, as do all the worlds; they are linked and unified with each other.

But if, God forbid, he connects himself to the folly of the world's vanities, which have no existence -- the things which are finite -- this is being connected to false-

hood, Heaven forfend, sheker, which is also spelled from the letters of keresh. This is what my master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, said about the verse, "[Take heed lest your heart be deceived] and you turn aside and serve other gods" [Deuteronomy 11:16]. As soon as one turns himself from true attachment and connection to the Creator, may He be blessed, he is considered as serving other gods, for he is then connected to them, and they are the aspect of falsehood.¹¹⁹

It is known that the human being is created with both good and evil, and two aspects are before him, as it is written, "See, I have set before you good, etc. Therefore choose life" [Deuteronomy 30:15-19]. The essential purpose is that one exert oneself in connecting all things to their root, and to make good out of the evil that is in them, as in the verse [Psalm 34:15]; "Turn from evil and do good" -- from the evil make good.¹²⁰

To understand this, that every manifestation of evil is, at its root, good, [consider] the examples of eating and drinking and making love: when one attaches himself while engaging in these things to their root, then in eating and drinking he raises the holy sparks, and in lovemaking brings about supernal union and righteous children. But Heaven protect us if the opposite occurs. Then "Yeshurun grew fat and kicked" [Deuteronomy 32:15]: the evil inclination is stirred up within him.¹²¹ This is enough for the wise.

This is the sense of "Who is wise? One who learns from everyone." From those who were around my master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, I heard: "even from the evil inclination one should learn!" There are various ways to do this in divine service; and by these means all evil is raised to good, and in this the quality of judgment is changed to the quality of mercy.

It is this that is suggested in the passage, **And you shall make the boards for the tabernacle.** That is, "Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them" -- truly within them!¹²² But let the building of this tabernacle be with kerashim, that is, with connections, kesharim, as mentioned above, that one might connect himself to the Creator, blessed be He, and fulfill the precept "In all your ways acknowledge Him" [Proverbs 3:6]. Even when doing things that are from the realm of the evil inclination, let one choose to link himself to their root. Thus he will raise them, and evil will be transformed into good. Thus the passage continues, **out of acacia wood:** 'azei connotes counsels ('ezot) and shittim in gematria is Satan, may the Merciful One protect us.¹²³ Even those things that are from the Satanic side, as mentioned above, are **standing**. In other words, they will have an ascent (Kimah), along the lines of [Genesis 23:20]: "the field . . . was made over (va-yakam) to Abraham." That is, because it belonged to Abraham, it had

a raising-up, an ascent. The explanation is also the same here: one will raise up and lift even the aspect of evil from the side of Satan and the evil inclination. Good will be made from evil, and thus the quality of judgment will be changed to the quality of mercy, and all the forces of judgment will be sweetened. So may it be speedily in our own day! Amen.

You shall command the children of Israel [to bring you pure olive oil, beaten for the light].

(Tezavveh, Exodus 27:20)¹²⁴

The root of the advice is that when you want to speak and to unite the children of Israel to their Father in heaven, then **to bring you**: with words you must attract them **to you**, that they be drawn after you; then you will be able to restore them, and to attach them **to you**. This is the sense of [the interpretation in Pesahim 22b of Deuteronomy 6:13] "You shall fear YHVH your God": including the wise.¹²⁵ For when one fears God and believes in Him, then he is joined in the awe of the wise, and one who is wise, in his cleaving in the awe of God, attaches along with him all those who fear truly and who are drawn after him. My master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, expressed the root of this matter [commenting

on Berakhot 33b] "Yes, in regard to Moses [the fear of Heaven] was a little thing": simply, when they were afraid of Moses, then awe was a little thing, because Moses was attaching them to inward awe through their cleaving to him.¹²⁶ Such seem to me to be his words.

Olive oil is [to be understood] following that which I heard from my master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, concerning the verse "Your name is like finest oil, therefore maidens love you" [Song of Songs 1:3]: It is sometimes necessary to dress the Torah in garments in order to place it in human hearts. It is like a doctor who sees that the one who is sick cannot take the medicine, because it seems bitter to him: he must clothe the drug in sweetmeats so that he will take it. This is the meaning of "Your name is like finest oil, therefore maidens love you"; and it is enough for one who understands.¹²⁷ In any case, take care that you be **pure** and guiltless, that you not glorify yourself in your heart but be humble. This is the explanation of **beaten for light**: be **beaten** in your heart, and know that you have been raised up only **for light** for the world. Thus was it said, "Cast bile among the students" [Ketubbot 103b], meaning, cast out the bitterness from your heart, and let it not be in you at all but in the students, so that they will fear you.¹²⁸ Understand this.

The Jews had light [and gladness and joy and honor].

(Purim Homily, Esther 8:16)¹²⁹

This is Torah.

This should be interpreted according to that with which God graced me in his mercy and great kindness, that it is known that one who denies idolatry is called a Jew.¹³⁰ And I heard in the name of my master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, that pride is called idolatry, and anyone who denies it is called a Jew.

Moses our Rabbi, peace be upon him, "was very humble, more so than any other man" [Numbers 12:3] -- he was the aspect of mah (what), which is the four-letter name of God and its expansion, and therefore the Torah was given to him, for "In Da'at the chambers are filled" [Proverbs 24:4].¹³¹ Through him the four-letter Name was filled out to ten letters to light ten sayings,¹³² the root of the entire Torah, 248 commands and 365 prohibitions. [Moses] was worthy of this because of his meekness, for he was the aspect mah.

This is the sense of "'And God saw that the light was good' to hide away" [Hagigah 12a on Genesis 1:4].¹³³ I heard in the name of my master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, "Where did he hide it? In the Torah." And this [also is the sense] of the interpretation which I saw in my dream of an event that is

mentioned in the Midrash [Bava Batra 74b]¹³⁴: R. Eliezer and R. Yehoshua were travelling in a boat. One was awake and one asleep. R. Eliezer awakened as R. Yehoshua trembled. He said to him "What is causing you to tremble?" He said, "I have seen a great light in the sea." [Eliezer] said, "Perhaps it was the eyes of Leviathan, of which it is said, 'His eyes are like the eyelids of the dawn' [Job 41:10]."

Now, this is an allegory, for the Torah is the sea of wisdom, and the boat is the mind of the person; and when the two great ones of Israel were travelling the sea of wisdom, and were occupied with it, one was in the state "alert," but one in the state "asleep" for he had not entered so much into Wisdom at that time. He trembled and asked him, "What is this marvelous thing?" And he said to him, "This is his sublime marvel," for he saw that great light, that is, that light by which one can see from one end of the world to the other, which the Holy One, blessed be He, hid. [He saw it] in the sea -- in the sea of Torah, as mentioned above. Thus he was amazed at the kind of thing this hiding was, because everyone could see with it -- by means of the Torah -- from one end of the world to the other.

Then he answered, "Perhaps it is from the eye of Leviathan," that is to say, that this is only for zaddikim, who are constantly accompanying and attaching themselves to the Creator,¹³⁵ blessed be He, when they are engaged in Torah -- it is they and they alone who can use that light.

This is [the meaning of the verse] **To the Jews:** that is, they who deny idolatry, which is pride, and who are [thus] in the aspect mah -- they are the ones who have this **light**, the light hidden within the Torah.

Their work had been enough to do all the work, and more.

(Va-Yakhel, Exodus 36:7)¹³⁶

This has no explanation nor any connection; but it should be explained as an allusion, following that which the Sages of blessed memory said in regard to the question about the early hasidim: [since they spend nine hours each day in prayer] "when will they have time for Torah, and when will their work be done?" They answered, "Because they were hasidim, their Torah was retained and their work blessed [Berakhot 32b]. And it should be said that this is intimated here. **Their work**, that is the work of the service of holiness, which is prayer, called the service of the heart, **had been enough to do all the work**; in other words, it was sufficient for all their work which needed to be done, because "their work was blessed." **And more** (hoter) contains the letters of Torah; which is to say that the little they studied was also sufficient for their Torah, because "their Torah was retained," as already noted. Understand this.

"Their Torah was retained" should also be explained through allusion: "retained" (mishtameret) is an expression similar to dregs (shemarim). In other words, it was clear and purified of all sediment, dross, and refuse, because they were hasidim. Therefore, the little that they studied was sufficient, like the saying [of the Sages in Menahot 110a], "One who does much and one who does little," as mentioned above.¹³⁷ Understand this.

The Lord called to Moses . . .
 (Va-Yikra', Leviticus 1:1)¹³⁸

One should further explain along the lines of that which is stated in the Midrash [Va-Yikra Rabba 1:8]: Aaron and his sons and all the elders said, "We do not yet know who is more beloved to God, blessed be He." Look in the 'Or ha-Hayyim.¹³⁸ One should explain: because all of them expected that God would call them. But "Moses was very meek, more so than any other man" [Numbers 12:3], and he thought to himself that God would certainly not call him, therefore **the Lord called to Moses**, for "I dwell . . . with him who is of a contrite and humble spirit" [Isaiah 57:15]. This, it should be said, is the hint of the small alef in the word **called** (va-yikra').¹⁴⁰ That is, with the measure that one uses, so is it measured to him [Megillah 12b]: because he made

himself very small in the measure of humility, therefore-- as if it were possible -- the Blessed Holy One contracted and made Himself small to be revealed to him. This is the meaning of the small alef in va-yikra': the Head ('aluf) of the world.

This is also a hint for every individual: that he conduct himself in humility, and learn from the Creator, may He be blessed. Therefore a small alef is written in the word va-yikra'. Understand this.

. . . The small alef makes a further allusion, along the lines of what I have heard said in the name of R. Yosef, the righteous preacher of the holy community of Polnoyye,¹⁴¹ may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come. Concerning that which the world says, that those who study certainly learn, but the Hasidim learn nothing,¹⁴² he said that the truth is that with every additional thing that those who study learn, they are greater in their own eyes, and consider themselves to have already learned much -- all that is needed. But with every additional thing that the Hasidim learn, they are smaller in themselves. This is their whole aim: teaching themselves to be personally small and lowly. It is this which the small alef suggests: alef expresses learning; its small size, making themselves small.¹⁴³ Understand this.

**Moses diligently inquired about the goat of
the sin offering, and behold, it was burnt.**
(Shemini, Leviticus 10:16)¹⁴⁴

It makes a further hint, for it is known that there is no suffering without sin [Shabbat 45a]. For from a mizvah a defending angel is created; and similarly, God forbid, shells are created from a transgression, and it is they that chastise the individual, as it is written: "Your misfortune reproves you" [Jeremiah 2:19]. What is its remedy? Let one search his actions for that in which he sinned, and return in teshuvah. All the shells are smashed and abolished when one enters the state of da'at, the reverse of the time of sin. For no one commits a transgression unless a spirit of madness enters into him [Sotah 3a], and da'at leaves him. But when one repents of his sin, and comes to the state of return of da'at, all the shells are removed.¹⁴⁵

It is this to which the verse alludes. **About the goat** suggests shells, as has already been mentioned.¹⁴⁶ **Of the sin offering** [implies] that they are created and made from the sin of humankind, God forbid. **Diligently inquired** (darosh darash) means that when one searches (doresh) and investigates, and examines his actions for that in which he has already sinned, and seeks (doresh) God, taking it upon himself that he not sin again -- this accounts for the two forms of darash. **Moses** means that all is by the restoration and revelation of da'at, the aspect of Moses, to him. Then

behold, it was burnt: that is, the shells are burned and eradicated.

**[The land shall not be sold in perpetuity,
for the land is Mine;] for you are strangers
and settlers with Me.**

(Be-Har, Leviticus 25:23)¹⁴⁷

One should interpret this as an allusion, and understand it according to what I heard from a certain wise man concerning the verse "I am a sojourner on earth; do not hide Your mizvot from me!" [Psalm 119:19]. It is known from the ways of the world that one who is a stranger has no one to whom he can attach himself, draw close, and relate all that has happened to him and all that is in his heart, for he has no companion -- neither Israel nor the gentiles.¹⁴⁸ However, when he sees his fellow stranger, then each of them tells the other all that has occurred.

Now, it is known that the Holy Blessed One is like a stranger in this world who has no one upon whom to cause the Presence of His glory to rest, for "few are they, etc."¹⁴⁹ This is what King David, peace be upon him, prayed. "I am a sojourner on earth": that is, I also do not want to be one who is settled in this world. I am merely a stranger in this world. Therefore, "do not hide your mizvot from me": like

one stranger before his companion, telling him all that is in his heart.

So should we interpret the allusion in this verse, **For you are strangers and settlers:** when you are as strangers in this world, and as settlers in the world that is coming; then **you are with me**, for I am also a stranger in this world, as mentioned above, and obviously I will not hide my mizvot from you. Understand this.

But let them not go inside to witness the dismantling of the holy things, lest they die.

(Be-Midbar, Numbers 4:20)¹⁵⁰

One should explain the allusion in this along the lines of that which I heard from my master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, that there are times when one comes to the zaddik to learn from his actions, but the zaddik is then in the state of smallness and such does he receive from him, not having known to be heedful of him. As happened when one came to the celebrated rabbi, our teacher and master, R. Nahman,¹⁵¹ may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come: when he saw that he was then drinking coffee in tallit and tefillin, he went back home, and began to behave in the same way. This is the purpose of the warning, **Let them not go**

inside to witness, that is, for the sake of seeing his actions and immediately accepting them. **The dismantling** (ke-valla') **of the holy things** suggests that there are times in which he is in the period of smallness; and then holiness is swallowed up (nivla') in him. Therefore, **they die**: that is, they fall from their level. One should not come to receive this; but when one sees the time of greatness let him receive from him.¹⁵²

Understand this, for the knowledge of those who listen is limited and they do not understand, and there are good things in this. And if God wills, when he grants favor unto me and I am healthier, I will explain.¹⁵³

At the command of YHVH [the people of Israel] journeyed, and at the command of YHVH they encamped.

(Be-Ha'alotekha, Numbers 9:18)¹⁵⁴

It is appropriate to consider that "at the command of YHVH . . . at the command of YHVH" is said three times in this portion: first [9:18] is said, **At the command of YHVH . . . they journeyed, and at the command of YHVH they encamped**, and two times [9:20, 23] "at the command of YHVH they encamped, and at the command of YHVH they journeyed." Certainly, language is not changed, nor is one thing repeated three times for no reason.

In my humble opinion, we should explain this in accord with that which I heard said in the name of the late rabbi, our teacher and master, R. Yehudah Leib of Pistin, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, on the verse [Psalm 48:15] "He will lead us evermore ('al-mut): that is, like this young lad ('elem). For example, when his father taught him to walk, at first he helped him to walk a little with his hands. Then he put him down, and moved himself a short distance away from him, his intention being that the infant walk by himself. In this way he familiarizes the child with the motions of walking. He does so numerous times, each time moving further away, in order to accustom him, so that he will walk on his own without any aid or moving away. The moral has to do with our Father, our King. At first, the Blessed Holy One gives the individual pleasure in his service, and He Himself leads his heart to Him. Then He moves away from him, so that he will walk a little on his own, by means of his endeavour and excitement. This is the sense of "He will lead us evermore": like this youth or child. [His words extend] to this point.

This is what occurs at the beginning of service, in the time of one's youth; but afterwards, when one has grown in the service of God, may He be blessed, one can also be at this level, which is the aspects of smallness and greatness, as is known. The state of smallness is the moving away, so that one will be able to reach the state of original great-

ness, and a second greatness.¹⁵⁵ When one is in smallness and understands that he is in the state of concealment, may the Merciful One save us, and has longings concerning this, and, making an effort, goes from rung to rung, bringing himself near by "walking" to his Father in heaven, then, certainly, by this means the levels of his smallness also have a great elevation, for he thereby comes to the state of greatness, and it actually becomes a throne and chariot to the highest rung.

In this regard there are a variety of profound paths [taught] in the name of my master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come-- those levels, what they do, and what they raise up -- and it is alluded to in the book, Toledot Ya'akov Yosef, the Kohen. Look there. But this is the sense of what I heard in the name of our late teacher and master, R. Saul of Mezboz, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, [concerning] a hint in the Gemara: Honor your wives (neshaikhu), so that you may prosper [Bava Mezhiah 59a]. Neshaikhu expresses forgetting, like "God has made me forget" (nashani) [Genesis 41:51]. In other words, when I fall at times into a state of smallness and forget God, do not treat me with contempt, saying that God has forsaken me and that I am forgotten,¹⁵⁶ God forbid. Rather the contrary is true: it is "so that you may prosper," that is, to come afterwards from this to a great level. This also is the meaning of "the

stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone" [Psalm 118:22]; and thus is it said, "Does anyone scorn a day of small beginnings (katnut)? [They shall rejoice]" [Zechariah 4:10]. Understand this.

This is the principle which the holy Torah intimates for every stage of a person's service, from one's youth to eternity, and also why **at the command of YHVH** is repeated three times. First, **at the command of YHVH . . . they journeyed, and at the command of YHVH they encamped:** this refers to the beginning of an individual's service, when the Blessed Holy One Himself leads him. Thus it says **at the command of YHVH . . . they journeyed;** but afterwards He leaves him on his own, accounting for **at the command of YHVH they encamped (yahanu).** For the fact that one falls from his level is **at the command of YHVH,** who puts him down (hiniho) and moves Himself a little bit away from him so that he will become familiar with service, walking on his own to bring himself close to his Father in heaven.¹⁵⁷ This is the general principle given in regard to the service of the Creator, blessed be He. But afterwards it is twice explicitly stated: "at the command of YHVH they encamped, and at the command of YHVH they journeyed." This is to make a hint concerning the first smallness and the first greatness, and the second smallness and second greatness. In this manner is answered the difficulty raised by the Gemara which asks: "It is right concerning 'at the command of YHVH they

journeyed,' but . . ."¹⁵⁸ Look there. It will be understood in accord with our method, for when the journey is "at the command of YHVH", the encampment is also "at the command of YHVH", for it becomes a throne and chariot, as has already been said. Understand this.

In this manner one should also explain the allusion [in Numbers 10:6] "Teru'ah shall be sounded for their journeys": Teru'ah has two interpretations: one, that it expresses shattering, as "You shall smash them (tero'em) with an iron rod" [Psalm 2:9]; two, that it expresses joining, as "their King's acclaim is in their midst" [Numbers 23:21].¹⁵⁹ What "for their journeys" hints is that the journey, the passage from level to level, is according to teru'ah, that is, breaking, God forbid -- in other words, when one falls on occasion into smallness, and by means of this a joining and throne are made. "One is so near to another [that no air can come between them]," "small and great alike" [Job 41:8, Deuteronomy 1:17]. Then the [second] interpretation of teru'ah is brought about, expressing joining and unification, as previously mentioned. Understand this.

**But when convoking the congregation you shall
sound teki'ah and not teru'ah.**

(Be-Ha'alotekha, Numbers 10:7)¹⁶⁰

This should be explained in accord with that which I have heard said in the name of the late rabbi, our teacher and master, R. Nahman of Horodenka, of blessed memory: When an individual is in the state of smallness, and knows and understands this, he should [also] understand that there are certainly those who are at that moment in the state of greatness, and he should include himself with them. This, it should be said, is what is alluded to in the verse. **When convoking the congregation** suggests that when the congregation are in unity and love, close to one another, then when one happens to be in a state of smallness, nevertheless it will be considered greatness through his own inclusion in the whole. There, the state of greatness definitely exists, and thus it also is drawn to him. This is the sense of **you shall sound teki'ah and not teru'ah**: you will not be considered in the aspect of shattering and smallness; rather, out of this, joining and unity will come about.¹⁶¹ This is the aspect of hesed and teki'ah, and not that of din and smallness, which is the meaning of **and not teru'ah**. Understand this.

There is more in this, a profound path in the name of my master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, included in the book Toledot Ya'akov Yosef: When an individual is in smallness, it is in order to raise the base, lower rungs. This is the meaning of

When convoking the congregation, that is, the people, the lower rungs called by the name "people." Then you shall sound teki'ah and not teru'ah: the aspect teru'ah becomes that of teki'ah. And the hint in this is to call together the people.

If, along the road, you chance upon a bird's nest, in any tree [or on the ground] . . . and the mother sitting over the fledglings or on the eggs . . . Let the mother go [and take only the young], so that you may fare well and have a long life.

(Ki Teze, Deuteronomy 22:6-7)¹⁶²

This should be explained as an allusion, for the Shekhinah is called **bird's nest**, because **bird** refers to the soul. It expresses sparkling and clarity; and it also is an expression for chattering and speech, and speech is malkhut, which is the Shekhinah, as it were.¹⁶³ She is called **bird's nest** because the soul of Israel has its source in her.¹⁶⁴

Along the road [can be understood] following that which I heard from my teacher and master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, that the Shekhinah is [present] from above to below, unto the end of all levels. This is the secret meaning of "You give life to all of them" [Nehemiah 9:6]: even when an individual commits a sin, God forbid, then too the Shekhinah is clothed in him. For without her, he would not have had the power to

do this, or to move a single limb, because it is she who enlivens him and gives him strength and vitality. This, as if it were possible, is the exile of the Shekhinah. This, then, is the meaning of **along the road** (derekh): in the union of falsehood and fornication, as "This is the way (derekh) of an adulteress" [Proverbs 30:20] or following [Psalm 37:14], "[The wicked . . .] bend (darekhu) their bows," referring to falsehood. In other words, there also [i.e., even in such actions] the Shekhinah is clothed, as if it were possible; and this is the exile of the Shekhinah, as already mentioned. **In any tree or on the ground** suggests that the Shekhinah's putting on of garments is from above to below; in the upper levels, which is the sense of **in [any] tree**, and in the lower rungs, to which **on the ground** refers.

And the mother, that is, the Shekhinah, as if it were possible, **sits over the fledglings**: In other words, they do not yet have feathers and so are called "fledglings"; and this alludes to the two arms,¹⁶⁵ Hesed and Gevurah, which are love and awe. That is, even in the lower levels, where there is no love nor fear of God, **the mother, Shekhinah, sits over** and protects them, and eagerly awaits for them to correct their actions. **Or on the eggs** refers to one who is formless, in that he has a holy soul but is still nude, without Torah and mizvot; yet out of him there might emerge a vessel and a complete human being. Over this one the Shekhinah sits and yearns. **Let the mother go** [shalleah teshallah] expresses the

waters of Shiloah¹⁶⁶: take care to draw her out and enlarge her, etc., **so that you may fare well**. That is, when one corrects the lack of the Shekhinah and raises her above to her root, as if it were possible, then there is also drawn down to him goodness in the physical realm, and, in the realm of the spirit, the enlightening of his soul. And you will **have a long life** (yamim) refers to oceans (yamim) and streams; that is, you will also draw forth springs and fountains in all the worlds.¹⁶⁷

Alternatively, the following could be said.

If a bird's nest chance to be before you [along the road, in any tree or on the ground, with fledglings or eggs,] and the mother sitting [over the fledglings or on the eggs] . . . Let the mother go [and take only the young, so that you may fare well] and have a long life.

Though we have already been enlightened regarding this passage by the holy Zohar and the Tikkunim with supernal secrets, I also will say that with which God has graced me in his compassion and great love.

The entire world was created only for His glory; and glory refers to the dwelling of the Shekhinah which is in Israel. For this the world was created. This is the explanation of the verse, "All who are called by My name, whom I have created, formed and made for my glory" [Isaiah

43:7]. It alludes here to each of the four worlds -- emanation, creation, formation, and action¹⁶⁸ -- to teach about the extension of the Shekhinah's presence from 'En Sof to that without end. This is the purpose of all creation. One who is worthy that the effluence of the Shekhinah's light rests upon him -- the world was created only for his sake, "for this is the whole of a human being" [Kohelet 12:13]. He can cleanse and purify the souls of Israel that find delight in him; and in whatever place he is, the Shekhinah is with him.¹⁶⁹

This, one should say, is hinted in the verse. **If you chance upon (yikare'):** The Torah is written without vowels in order that one interpret it in seventy facets,¹⁷⁰ and it is as if yikra', "one calls", was written, expressing drawing out. **Nest** refers to the Shekhinah, and to that time when you are at the level at which you can draw forth the Shekhinah, as if it were possible, who is a nest for the bird, the Blessed Holy One [Tikkunei Zohar, Introduction (2a)]. As it is written: "Like a bird [. . .] who strays from his place" [Proverbs 27:8]. Or, following the Rambam, who wrote that all poets are called birds because when morning dawns they begin to sing,¹⁷¹ **bird's nest** can refer to the Shekhinah, who is the nest of the luminous light, the light of the world. You will succeed in drawing the outpouring of their light unto you. Then, **before you along the road:** that is, in any place you happen to be -- "at home and

when you walk along the road" [Deuteronomy 6:7] -- she goes before you. **In any tree** means that in all matters of Torah, called the tree of life, which you study, she comes and rests upon you; as the Sages said, "Even one who sits [alone] and engages in Torah, the Shekhinah abides with him" [Mishnah Avot 3:9]. **Or on the ground:** even when you are occupied with material, earthly things, she will also be with you. As I heard from my master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, on the verse "I will walk about at ease (va-rehavah), for I have sought Your precept" [Psalm 119:45]: King David, may he rest in peace, was praising himself because he was able to walk through the markets and the streets (va-rehovot); and the reason was "I have sought Your precepts." That is, he had never sought anything other than unification: his goal was always that he be able to unite the Blessed Holy One and His Shekhinah.¹⁷²

Fledglings or eggs suggests that one must have compassion on the souls of Israel, in which are found these two aspects. That is, they have begun to exert themselves in the service of God, may He be blessed, but it is abandoned by them because of that which hinders each one. There are those who do the work of God as "an obligation done by rote" [Isaiah 29:13], without awe and love; and this is the aspect of **fledglings**, in that they have no feathers, for "Torah and prayer without awe and love do not fly up above" [Tikkunei Zohar, 10 (6a)]. There is also a lower level than this among

them: those who have not undertaken the least effort in God's service, but have within them a formless power. This is the meaning of **eggs**, for they are compared to an egg, which contains an embryonic power from which a fledgling will be constituted, but requires the trouble of warming it so that its potential can become actual, and a creature be formed. But this force has no limit, because from every creature numberless creatures can come, and many souls be brought to life. This sort of power is in every egg. Such is also the case with the person, who is merely a spark of Israel in whom lies an embryonic force so that that spark might expand in him, and he become worthy that the Shekhinah rest upon him in all his affairs. But it is necessary to arouse [those at this level], and to warm them, and to enkindle the holy spark within them, so that they be on fire for His service, may He be blessed.

And the mother sitting over the fledglings [or on the eggs] refers, as if it were possible, to the exile of the Shekhinah, in that she sits in every place in which there is a holy spark, and longs for it to cleave to her. This is the meaning of **the mother**, that is, if it can be said, the Shekhinah, **sitting** -- an expression of falling -- **over the fledglings [or on the eggs]**; in other words, those two aspects, for "His Kingdom rules over all" [Psalm 103:19]. For her this entails great suffering, in that there is a spark of holiness even in the place of the shell. And thus

Let go (shalleah teshallah) expresses the waters of Shiloah: [the verse] alerts the zaddik that he should have compassion on those stages, and that he take care to bring back to living water, which is the Torah,¹⁷³ and service, **the mother**, the Shekhinah, as if it were possible, by arousing those two levels mentioned above to His service, may He be blessed. Thereby the holy sparks will be raised to their source and root. **And take for yourself** (tikkah lakh) **only the young**: you also profit from **the young** whom you bring to life and arouse. **So that you may fare well**: you will increase, and good will be increased in your soul in reward, in that you bring the king's son back to the king. **And have a long life**: you will attain that place from which long life is drawn forth. Understand this.

Sing, O barren one, you who did not bear!
. . . [For the children of the wife forlorn
shall outnumber those of the espoused.
 (Haftarah, Ki Teze, Isaiah 54:1)¹⁷⁴

First we will clarify "Be not like slaves who serve their master for the sake of receiving reward; be rather like slaves who serve the master with no thought of receiving reward," [Mishnah Avot 1:3] -- and there is another version: "for the sake of not receiving reward." I heard from my master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the

life of the world to come, that the two versions are [both] correct, and are rungs, one above the other. For "with no thought of receiving reward" is proper and great service. That is, when one prays about something, his concentration would be on an elevated need,¹⁷⁵ and if that about which he prays comes, it comes, and if it doesn't come, it doesn't come; likewise all the person's service and what he does would be for the sake of heaven, and not for the sake of something for his own pleasure. But there is another lofty level, exemplified by one who greatly desires, whose heart burns to talk with the king; and the king has issued a decree saying that he will fulfill the request of anyone who makes an entreaty. When this person, whose wish and desire is to be in constant conversation with the king, comes before him to make his request, he fears that the king will grant it and will supply his lack. Then what would he have about which to speak again with the king? Therefore his greater desire is that his request not be fulfilled, in order that he have some reason to come again before the king at any time and to talk with him.¹⁷⁶

This is the explanation of "a prayer of the wretched when he is faint and pours forth his plea before the Lord" [Psalm 102:1]: all the prayers of the one who is in misery are for "pouring forth his plea before the Lord". It is as recorded in the Talmud which alluded to this in the deed of Samuel the Younger.¹⁷⁷ This is the meaning of "for the sake

of not receiving reward". And the Midrash [on Deuteronomy 7:14], "there shall be no barren male or female among you," states that your prayer will not be barren [Devarim Rabbah 3:6]. So the expression **barren** is found in the context of prayer; and this is the sense of **Sing, O barren one, you who did not bear:** that very prayer in which your request was not granted is a great joy and exultation, like "for the sake of not receiving reward" and like prayer for the one who is poor, as have already been mentioned. **For the children of the wife forlorn shall outnumber those of the espoused:** it is a great rung to talk with the King at any time. Understand this, for I have abbreviated.

Or the following could be said: **Sing, O barren one, you who did not bear . . . for the children of the wife forlorn shall outnumber those of the espoused, said the Lord.**

My master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, said that all prayers effect action in the upper worlds, and sometimes at the ends of the earth. He based himself on [Psalm 12:9], "as zulut is exalted among humanity": "those are the things that are of paramount importance in the world" [Berakhot 6b] from which are made awesome things in the heights of the worlds. But people think that their prayers are not accepted, and so they disregard them. This is the sense of **Sing, O barren**

one, you who did not bear, as has already been said, for the children of the wife forlorn [shall outnumber those of the espoused]: the prayers which you consider **forlorn** have an effect greater than your physical eyes can see.

**Arise, shine, for your light has dawned, The
glory of YHVH has shone upon you! Behold!
Darkness shall cover the earth, and dark mist
the peoples; [But upon you YHVH will shine].**
(Haftarah, Ki Tavo', Isaiah 60:1-2)¹⁷⁸

I heard a parable from my master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, concerning a king who through illusion created many barriers, one in front of another, and also encircling rivers between one wall and another, a multitude of frightening soldiers, and also bears, lions, and other kinds of terrifying animals, so that people would be afraid to approach him and not everyone wanting to profess the name would come and do so [cf. Mishnah Berakhot 2:8]. The king was terrible, his kingdom ruling over all; and the light of the king's face shone in all the worlds, and his glory filled the earth. The walls and that which went round about hid the king's face; but it was illusory.

Heralds went forth: "To anyone who comes to the king, the king will give wealth and honor; and he will be one of his ministers, standing in his palace." Who would not

want this? But upon coming to the first wall and seeing how long and tall it was, and [seeing] the other things that alarm human hearts, they were taken aback. Among them there was one who went [past] several walls, one within another. There stood distinguished officers, appointed by the king, dispersing great sums of money to the one who came within the walls. And it happened that, after seeing that he had such precious riches and had already attained monetary treasures, he withdrew, even though he had already seen that he had passed several walls and rivers, and that there was no troubling evil there, nor water, nor wall. In any case, since each wall was higher and wider than the former and the fearsome terror greater, so that one who might want to would not come close to the king, [he withdrew].

However, the king's son yearned in his innards for his father, and the compassion of his father [was aroused] toward the son, drawing him to the light of his face, in which light of the face of the king is never-ending eternal life.¹⁷⁹ From the face of the king, one who is worthy of seeing him, then, the light of his face shines in the whole world. "All who live in the world and inhabit the earth" will be in awe of him, as before the king himself, and he has authority "to put to death and to give life", "to bind their kings with shackles", and to untie and set free the imprisoned,¹⁸⁰ with the strength of the light of the king's face.

In the case of the king's son, it is certain that the power of the father was in his son, through wisdom. When he came to the walls and rivers, to the soldiers and the bears, and all the frightening things hiding the face of the king, he was extremely astounded. "Why is a merciful king like you -- 'as a father has compassion for his children' [Psalm 103:13] -- hiding yourself with concealments such as these? 'And I, where shall I go' [Genesis 37:30]?" He cried out, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" [Psalm 22:2]. With the strength of his heart, broken and burning to come to his father, he risked his life and compelled himself to leap over the walls and streams; and he distributed all his wealth to the soldiers who were around about there. When his father saw his longing and his risking of himself, and when his cry reached the ears of his father the king, he removed these illusions. He looked, and there was not a single wall, nor any dividing curtain, but level land, gardens and orchards, and pleasure palaces. The king's servants, in splendid garments, and all kinds of musicians were standing, and the king was sitting on his royal throne; "and the land shone with his glory" [Ezekiel 43:2].

He looked and fell on his face, and said, "Alas, my lord the king, my father and my king! What is this? Why did you conceal your face from me? 'You hid your face; I was terrified' [Psalm 30:8] of your soldiers, your soldiers and your walls or the other things that frightened me. I nearly

died!" Then the king said, "Get up, my son, my beloved!" He held out to him the golden scepter that was in his hand, and he took hold of him and clothed him in his majesty and his light and his garment, and he placed his crown on his head.¹⁸¹

He said to him, "I did not do all this nor against you, but in order to test you and to know what was in your heart¹⁸² -- your awe and love toward me. Now, my son, my beloved, go through all the world. Behold, I have given you of my majesty, and my light shines upon your face; you dress in my garment and a crown is placed on your head so that all the peoples of the earth may know that you are my son. As for the concealments and fearful things, all that you saw was to prevent coming near me those who hate you, who do not wish your good but are arrogant toward you and slander you and do not desire your reign. They want to take possession of your kingdom, for they know that as long as you are alive their realm will not be firmly established. Therefore, if they came before me, they would have slandered you with reports of abhorrent acts, [saying] that you went with them, and at their suggestion, to the tavern, and engaged in nearly every kind of evil. Would I not have listened thus far to their evil advice to push you from me? They would have ruled my kingdom. But now, my son, do not fear, for your light is my light, and my kingdom which rules over all is yours, and to you all will bow down, since you have returned to me and I

have seen your longing. They will not come before me to see the light of my face; for they will not be able to do so because of the extent of the barriers, encompassments, and terrifying obstacles. Deal with them as seems good to you; 'every nation and kingdom that will not serve you' besiege 'until it fall' [Isaiah 60:12; Deuteronomy 20:20]." The moral is clear.

This, then, is the meaning of **Arise, shine, for your light has dawned** (ba'): ba' expresses the departure of the light, as "for the sun had set (ba')," [Genesis 28:11], so that **upon you can shine the glory of YHVE. Behold! Darkness shall cover the earth and dark mist the peoples**, for the darkness and the dividing screens fall upon those who come to wage war against you. However, one who knows that all the things that are hiding the face of the King are not a concealment, for "the whole earth is full of his glory" [Isaiah 6:3], cries out with a broken heart to his father, the Blessed Holy One, since he knows that He is a King of mercy who created the world in His love, and desires that His divinity be recognized. He knows that his soul is actually hewn from Him, as it is said, "He blew into his nostrils the breath of life" [Genesis 2:7]. Can anyone breathe [except from his own essence]?¹⁸³ If so, why is He concealing himself? Shattering his proud heart, he confesses his sins, and cries out, weeping. By this means the walls of falsehood that divide us from our God are destroyed.¹⁸⁴

Behold, the light of the King's face is **upon** us! He removes sin from us, and clothes us in festive garments, and places the pure miter on our heads -- the supernal divine intelligences of eternal life. Some of His majesty and His light is drawn down upon us; and this is the light of the holy Torah, as it is written, that in the light of Your face you have given us a Torah of life and power.¹⁸⁵ The capability is in our hands to act and to rule, to put to death and to give life. As it is written in the Talmud [Bereshit Rabba 77:1], The zaddikim are like the Blessed Holy One; as the Blessed Holy One revives the dead [so do they] . . . as He cures the sick [so do they].

This is also the sense of "Happy is the people who know (the joyful shout)" [Psalm 89:16]¹⁸⁶ -- which expresses shattering -- "O Lord": they understand that all the dividing screens are from God, and are actually an illusion. "They walk in the light of Your presence"; "in the light of a King's face is life" [Proverbs 16:15]; and the dividing screens are hurled upon [their] enemies. This is like "Haman's face was covered" [Esther 7:8], about which I saw written in Megillat Sefer that the king's servants covered Haman's face so that he would not look at the face of the king, for "in the light of a king's face is life."¹⁸⁷ The king certainly would not desire his continued life, but rather his death, since the king had demanded satisfaction for the insult to the queen, as it is written, "Does he mean

to ravish the queen [in my own palace? No sooner did these words leave the king's lips than Haman's face was covered]" [Esther 7:8].

There are more profound matters in this, and if God wills, when it is God's pleasure I will explain.

This is no trifling thing for you [; it is your very life; through it you shall live long on the land].

(Ha'azinu, Deuteronomy 32:47)¹⁸⁸

The Sages of blessed memory expounded, if it is **trifling**, then it is on account of **you** that it is trifling. One should interpret this in the manner of an allusion, but let us first explain "The Torah of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul" [Psalm 19:8]. Now it is known, "This is the Torah: a person" [Numbers 19:14]: as there are 248 limbs and 365 sinews in a person, so there are 248 positive commandments and 365 prohibitions in the Torah.¹⁸⁹ Each mizvah pertains to a particular human limb, in order to give life to that limb from the source of that mizvah. It turns out that from the entire Torah as a whole, life flows to the entire person. As the individual has five aspects, vital-soul, spirit, soul, spirit of life, and unitive soul, the holy Torah likewise contains the basic substance of the Torah and the Torah's spiritual dimensions, plain meaning,

allusion, exposition, and mystery, hidden secrets.¹⁹⁰ As my master and grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, said concerning [the teaching, Yalkut Shimoni, 1:286, that] "I am" ('anokhi) is an abbreviation of "I myself wrote it and gave it": "myself" refers to the Torah, etc. Therefore, the individual draws the vitality of holiness to himself in accord with his efforts in the Torah -- either the vital soul of Torah, or another of its aspects. It is as written in the holy Zohar: If he is worthy, he is given spirit. Look there. And this is the sense of "the Torah of the Lord is perfect": it has no deficiency; rather, all the aspects that are in the world are in it. Therefore, it "restores the soul." That is, by means of the Torah, one can attain to all five levels mentioned above.

Now each level which has a level higher than it is called the small one. Vital soul (nefesh), which is the aspect "resting", as in "He ceased from work and was refreshed (va-yinnafash)" [Exodus 31:17], is similarly the small one in contrast to that which is above it. It is the aspect "resting" because the vitality of anything which is purer and clearer is greater and has more movement than that which is not as pure as it is. This is the meaning of "restoring the soul": one is worthy of all the levels, and a great level restores and gives life to the rung smaller than

it -- which is the vital-soul -- when it dwells upon it.¹⁹¹
Understand this.

Concerning this I have already spoken, regarding the verse [Leviticus 18:5] "which if one do, he shall live by them" (va-ḥai ba-hem): ḥai is an abbreviation of spirit of life, (ḥayyah), unitive soul (yehidah). In other words, one can also win the rungs of spirit of life and unitive soul by means of the holy Torah, as has already been said.

This, then, is the meaning of **This is no trifling thing for you** (mi-kem): everything that is in you is also in the Torah; and the proof is that **it is your very life**, for all of your vitality comes only from it. Therefore, as the five levels mentioned previously are in you, so are they also in the Torah. And if it is **trifling**, it is on account of you and from you (mi-kem), that is, your grasp of the Torah is in accord with the level on which you are, and you merit a level in accord with your striving in the Torah, as previously noted. Everything comes to you by means of the holy Torah, for she is "the mother of all life" [Genesis 3:20]. **Through it you shall live long**, for it is your whole life-force, as is written. One who is enlightened will understand.

From the Collected Teachings

Thus said the Lord God: The gate of the inner court which faces east shall be closed on the six working days; it shall be opened on the sabbath day and it shall be opened on the day of the new moon.

(Ezekiel 46:1)¹⁹²

This should be explained along the lines of [Isaiah 43:16], "Who made a way through the sea and a path through mighty waters": For look, this world with all of its concerns and occupations is like the sea; and when in all one's material dealings one discovers the Blessed Holy One, Whose "presence fills all the earth" [Isaiah 6:3], then there he brings about unification, as if it were possible, blessed be He and blessed be His name. This is the sense of "way", which suggests unification, as in the verse "if He protects me in the way I am taking" [Genesis 28:20], [which] the Sages interpreted, from incest. "Path" has a similar meaning. On the six weekdays it is difficult to attain this level, except for the people of God who have da'at and soul.¹⁹³ However, on the Sabbath it is easy for all the world's inhabitants to reach the level just mentioned. Thus, God, may He be blessed, commanded eating and drinking and enjoying oneself on the Sabbath, for on the Sabbath all is united.

This, then, is the meaning of **the gate of the inner court which faces east**: "This is the gateway to the Lord-- the zaddikim shall enter through it" [Psalm 118:20], connecting all material matters to their root from the inner

aspect which is in them. "You have made them all with wisdom" [Psalm 104:24]; and this is the sense of "By wisdom [He] founded the earth" [Proverbs 3:19] -- daughter like father, for he raises His kingdom, which "reigns over all" [Psalm 103:19], in wisdom and understanding and da'at.¹⁹⁴ Thus **which faces east** means that whichever way you turn, you should face wisdom, which is the primary divine intelligence in which the three intelligences are included.¹⁹⁵ It is **closed on the six working days**; and concerning this it is said: "The Lord said to me: This gate is to be kept shut and is not to be opened. [No one shall enter by it,] for the Lord, the God of Israel, has entered by it" [Ezekiel 44:2-3], except "the prince," which Rashi explains as referring to the high priest. In other words, the gate mentioned above is opened to one who serves God. But "not everyone who wants a reputation [may assume it] [Mishnah Berakhot 2:8]. Only on **the Sabbath day and on the day of the new moon** is it opened for all the world's inhabitants to connect and unite the material with the spiritual. However, for the "prince," who is actually the Sabbath,¹⁹⁶ it is right that this gate be opened at any time he desires. Understand this.

Oh that he would kiss me with the kisses of
his mouth!

[For your love is more delightful than wine.
Your ointments yield a sweet fragrance,
Your name is like finest oil --
Therefore do maidens love you.]

(Song of Songs 1:2-3)¹⁹⁷

One should interpret this as an allusion, and it will become clear why it is that perfect zaddikim are weaker in [physical] strength than other people.

As is stated in the holy Zohar, there are several types of food: the food of all humankind is coarse and dense; that food which comes from higher above is finer food; and the most elevated food of all is the food of the companions, and it is the food which comes from supernal Wisdom, etc. It may be investigated there, in portion Be-Shallah [Zohar 2:61b].¹⁹⁸ It should be said that King Solomon, may he rest in peace, was alluding to this in this verse. **That he would kiss me** (yishshakni) is an expression of foods, like "By your command shall all my people be provided for" (yishshak) [Genesis 41:40]. **That he would kiss me with the kisses:** in other words, that I be nourished by the food of **his mouth**, that is, from Wisdom, following "She opens her mouth in wisdom" [Proverbs 31:26]. **For your love** and your affection are **more delightful than wine**, that is, than any kind of food included in the general category "wine" -- as it is known that the whole meal is called by the name of [its accompanying] drink, as in the verse, "the wine-feast" [Esther 7:7].

Your ointments yield a sweet fragrance [can be understood] following the statement that the language of the holy Zohar is suited to the soul even if one does not at all understand what it says.¹⁹⁹ Like one who enters a perfume shop: even though he takes nothing, nevertheless he absorbs a sweet smell. Such is exactly the case with one who comes to the place and palace where the zaddik is: it is impossible that he not absorb some **sweet fragrance** from the fragrance of the zaddik, even if he understands none of the zaddik's teaching. It is to this that the verse hints. **Your ointments yield a sweet fragrance**, that is, the fragrance of the perfectly wise -- as Rashi explained, "all robust men" [Judges 3:29] to refer to men of note, in other words, the wise,²⁰⁰ well noted as ones from whom to receive and absorb sweet fragrance, as has already been said.

Your name is like finest oil: Oil refers to a good name, following "A good name is better than fragrant oil" [Kohelet 7:1]. That is, their good name goes through the entire world and is extended by their wandering from place to place, like oil which is poured from vessel to vessel.²⁰¹ It all is **Your name:** all that they do is for the sake of Your great and awesome name. **Therefore do maidens love you:** The word ken [in **therefore**] has the numerical value of seventy, which suggests the seventy faces of the Torah.²⁰² In other words, by means of your Torah and the innovations that you make, **maidens love you.** **Maidens** ('alamot) refers to worlds

('olamot), and **love** in gematria is equal to "one",²⁰³ which means that they with the light of their Torah unite all the worlds. One who is enlightened will understand.

"These are the things I heard from the lips of
my master, my grandfather"

(Selections)204

Once I heard him say, "If one other person could recite 'God, merciful is your name' and 'Answer us' as I do, I would bring the Messiah."205

I heard further from him that his father was taken [i.e., he died] without speaking, like our master Moses, peace be upon him. If he had been taken while speaking, he would have filled all the spaces of the world with his Torah, and burned up all the shells; and he would have brought the Messiah.

I heard that [from] all the things which happened each day to King David, may he rest in peace, he created a chapter of the Psalms. He put the events into letters; and since letters have permutations and life, in this way all the things were sweetened.²⁰⁶ These things are obscure. Similarly, when one prays about something, for instance, concerning sickness, may

the Merciful One save us, one wraps that thing in the letters, and occasionally in a great feat. But the words are obscure and require understanding through a broad explanation. May God aid me with his Torah and enlighten me. Amen.

The parable of a prince, whose father sent him to another country, the air of which was not good: He gave him a garment, so that when he went outside he could wear that covering against the bad air. The characteristic of the air was that of deforming a person's body; and as the deformity entered the body, it also appeared in the garment. One had to keep watch against this. The moral: [The king's son] is each person, and the garment is his soul.²⁰⁷ This is enough for one who understands.

I saw the Rabbi Yehuda Leib, the preacher of Polnoyye, who had come from the upper world, great and much praised [cf. Psalm 48:2]. I was in my house, and leaping up and "twirling around with all strength" [2 Samuel 6:14], I asked him to bless me. I said to him, "I know you²⁰⁸ have come from the world above"; and I took both his hands and placed them on my head, and he blessed me. I said to him that I would give him

a note for my master, my grandfather, for the upper world, so that he would bless him there in exchange for the blessing which he had given me here.

In the name of the master Rabbi Israel Ba'al Shem Tov, may his soul rest in paradise, one finds written: "Circle the place [with the Torah scrolls] seven times; each time, with each circling, a psalm should be said, and one should begin to the right."²⁰⁹

DREAMS

The dreams found in the manuscripts of the holy Rabbi, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come.¹

I saw in my dream that I was sitting with my late in-law, our teacher, Rabbi Nahman in a certain gathering at the third meal on the Sabbath. He spoke words of Torah which I have forgotten; but this I remember because it was the introduction and beginning of his words: the human being, when he is a zaddik, is brought near the Torah; the Torah is in him and he is in it. The evidence is found in the passage [Dt. 22:9] "lest the fullness [of the seed which you have sown] be forfeited" with "the vineyard".²

In my dream I saw an etrog, a lulav, and another lulav with three myrtle branches.³

I saw in my dream that I was praying in a certain house of study. Afterwards the Torah was read, and after

that there was one who raised up and held the Torah scroll. I went up to the pulpit to look at the script, as is the custom, and in the Torah scroll I saw the letters tov (good), and other, different words following the letters tov.

In a dream on the eve of Sunday, portion Re'eh, in the year of God's counsel 5640 (1780), I saw that one shaved my head, and it was a sign that, if God wills, I will ascend to greatness. I also took a single nut that is called a walnut, broke the shell from it, and ate the nutmeat inside it.⁴ The interpretation is clear: God will break all the shells, spiritual and material, from me, and will give me all goodness in the spiritual and physical realms, and the raising of all the holy sparks from the shells. May He show us wonders in His holy Torah, and many more things such as these. Amen.

I saw in a dream Rabbi Mendel from the land of Israel. He was a guest at my house, along with other guests from Zaslieb, such as R. Solomon, son-in-law of Rabbi Israel, and also people from the states of Ruzhyn.⁵ After he finished the meal, I wanted to give him a cup to make a

blessing; but before he took the cup he began to sing the Song of Songs, not from the beginning but in the middle. Each time he recited some verses, he would teach about the verses; and I was not able to hear because he taught [so] quietly and quickly. After this he jumped up from the table to the middle of the house and was leaping and spinning around with all his might.⁶ Then he took me to my small house and danced with me, and it was astonishing to me to recite the Song of Songs while dancing on an ordinary day. After this. . . .⁷

On the Sabbath, portion Balak, 5541 (1781), I saw that an infant was to be circumcised, and my master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, appointed me to be the one to cut the flesh of his foreskin; and I did so, while he sat in the chair of Elijah of blessed memory.⁸

On the eve of Monday, portion Pinhas, 5541 (1781), I saw my master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come. I drew near him, face to face, and we actually joined together. He embraced me with both

his arms, and spoke to me in these words: "Your nature and my nature have gone forth into the world, my Master of the Name and your good name, so that you will serve God and study and teach Torah to Israel."

One man among the important guests who regularly came to the zaddikim to listen to them was standing there, and my master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, bowed his head to him; and he nodded his head as if to say, "May it surely be so!" I stand on the bench and see the movement of his head.

I saw that he was standing in my sukkah, and I welcomed the Sabbath, leading the prayers, and recited several verses of Lekhah Dodi.⁹

On the festival of Sukkot, I saw my master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come. He blessed me, and afterwards I asked him to study Torah with me. He replied that there would yet be time, for, if God willed, I would live many years. Then he said to me that he would study the letters of the alphabet with me.

I saw in a dream that I fastened myself, my body to his holy body, and within his beard, the holy beard. Afterwards, I heard the congregation reciting the thirteen attributes of God, "God compassionate [and gracious . . . [Ex. 34:6-7]], and I also began to recite, silently and without moving my lips; for I thought, this, indeed, is really the thirteen attributes -- that I am in his holy beard!¹⁰

In a dream I saw that I had put on three pairs of tefillin at one time; I also saw that twice, one time after the other, I went up to a house standing upon my father's house, and I climbed the stairs that were there.

I saw in a dream that my master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, brought me very close and hugged and kissed me.

On Thursday, portion Shemot, I saw that it was Sukkot, and I sat in a sukkah, and [I saw] an etrog and lulav. I also saw that I broke the small nuts called hazelnuts and ate the nutmeats inside them.

I saw in a dream, here in the holy community of Sudilkov, that I was climbing a stairway, and the steps were very close together; and because of this I was not able to be at ease in my mind nor in the course of my movement. With my foot I pushed the stair next to the uppermost, and it fell to the ground, to a place of mud and mire, so that I could enlarge my stride as I climbed.

On the eve of Wednesday, portion 'Ekev, 5545 (1785), here in the holy community of Sudlikov, I saw that I was in the second story of my late uncle, our teacher and master, Rabbi Zvi Hirsch, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come. There we circled the second floor with lulavs and etrogs. My master, my grandfather, may his memory be a blessing for the life of the world to come, was also there. Before this, I saw that he was reciting the seder for the

second night of Pesah; and it also seemed to me that it was Purim.

In a dream I saw my master, my grandfather, and he gave me a handful of coins. Among them there were quarter-rubles--several -- a half-ruble, white coins, old coins, and brass coins like the old gildens. And for my brother Baruch Leib, he also took from this what amounted to two old gilden. This was on our trips to the holy community of Meziboz. Such did I see in a dream on the eve of Friday, portion Hukat ha-Torah, 5540 (1780).

I saw in a dream, on the eve of Thursday, portion Va-Yeshev, 5545 (1784), that my master, my grandfather, went up to the Bimah in the synagogue and took the shofar and blew teki'ah-shevarim-teru'ah-teki'ah, teki'ah-shevarim-teki'ah, teki'ah-teru'ah-teki'ah.¹¹ He was reciting to himself, "Teki'ah . . ." And he was conducting himself in this way when he began to blow one teki'ah -- that is, the first teki'ah. He brought the shofar to his mouth, according to the custom of those who blow, and blew into it a little; then he was holding on to the side[s] of its body with both of his hands, and the sound was coming out of the shofar. I am standing, and am stunned -- what will I do? -- while he

recites by himself before the shofar blasts and blows by himself. But then, he called out, "Let him come forward," as one is called to the Torah scroll. I went up there, and I stood along the length of the shofar, and I said a blessing as one who comes up to the Torah scroll. And I was actually standing inside the shofar as the sound was coming out of it. Afterwards, I myself took the shofar to my house, and by myself blew teki'ah-shevarim-teru'ah-teki'ah.

This is its interpretation: A good than which there is certainly nothing better in all things -- in sweetening the forces of judgment away from me, in subduing all the accusers, and in enlightening me and all the world with the great shofar, which is the holy beard and the supernal mother, etc.¹²

After this, in the morning, I saw in a dream that I was walking in a kittel, and on it there were rows and rows of silver and gold woven into it: an actual royal garment.¹³ After this, during the night of Friday, on the eve of the holy Sabbath mentioned above [i.e., Va-Yeshev], I saw that it was Shemini Azeret, and I rejoiced with great joy;¹⁴ my master, my grandfather also rejoiced greatly. The interpretation is that the Blessed Holy One will sweeten the forces of judgment from us and from the entire world, completely, and it will be the time of salvation for us and for all Israel. Amen.

NOTES: BE-RESHIT

1. This identification of God, Israel, and Torah, attributed by Ephraim and many other kabbalists to the Zohar, is not stated there as such. The Zohar does identify each pair of these three, and in 3:73b notes that "the Torah is called berit, the Blessed Holy One is called berit, and the holy sign [of circumcision] is called berit; and in this way all are connected to one another and are not separated from each other." See Isaiah Tishby, "The Blessed Holy One, Torah, and Israel are One" -- The Source of the Saying in Luzatto's Commentary to the Idra Rabba" (Hebrew), Kiryat Sefer 50 (1975), pp. 480-92, 668-74. See also Berakhah Zak's further remarks on the subject, Kiryat Sefer, 57 (1982), pp. 179-84.
2. See Nahmanides' commentary to Genesis 2:7, in which he describes the divine origin of the soul, noting that one who breathes into another's nostrils puts some of his own breath within him. The framing of this saying as a rhetorical question is not found in Nahmanides. Chayim Chavel, in his edition of Nahmanides' commentary, cites an unspecified source in the Sefer ha-Kanah. See Moshe Hallamish, "On the Origin of a Dictum in the Rabbinic Literature, 'Whoever blows does so from his Inner Essence'" (Hebrew), Bar Ilan Annual 13 (1976):211-223. For a discussion of the development of the concept of the divine nature of the soul, and its expression in the writings of Shneur Zalman of Liady, see Louis Jacobs, "The Doctrine of the Divine Spark in Man in Jewish Sources," Studies in Rationalism and Universalism (London: Routledge, 1966), ed. Raphael Loewe, pp. 87-114.
3. Identification of Torah and person as two interrelated organisms is based here on a hyper-literal reading of the first three Hebrew words of Numbers 19:14, z'ot ha-Torah 'adam: "This is the Torah: when a person dies in a tent . . . everything in the tent . . . shall be unclean." In a similar misreading attributed to Resh Lakish (Berakhot 63b, Shabbat 83b), the first two phrases of the verse are cited as evidence that the Torah is fulfilled only by one who does away with himself for its sake. This midrash was known to the author of the Ra'aya Meheimna (Zohar 2:158b, 3:279a), who makes the identification of Torah and humanity

explicit in 3:29b, possibly the source of Ephraim's interpretation: "248 positive commandments and 365 prohibitions; and Torah is a human being. Thus is it written, 'This is the Torah, a man.'" For a fuller discussion of the Torah as organism, see Scholem, On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism, pp. 44-50.

4. "Names," shemot, refers to the use of divine names and combinations of names in healing. An amulet (kemi'ah), usually including secret words, or substances believed to guard one from harm or to have healing powers, was worn on the body. Such use is mentioned in both Talmuds. Remedies or charms (segullot) designate either another class of healing agents, including medicines, that were part of common healing practices at least since the time of Maimonides (commentary to Mishnah Shabbat 67a) and Albo ('Ikkarim, 124), or a class of more magical agents related to amulets.

On the medieval use of amulets and the place of charms in medicine, see Joshua Trachtenberg, Jewish Magic and Superstition (New York: Behrman, 1939), pp. 132-45, 199-202.

5. On lack of faith as the cause of the interruption of the flow of divine blessing to the world, see Zohar 3:197a, and Tishby, Mishnat ha-Zohar, 1:267.
6. I.e., the Torah uses the means in which one believes to effect healing; however, since it includes all means of healing, the efficacy is entirely the Torah's own. The idea that the Torah is all inclusive is found in Mishnah Avot 5:25.
7. Gematria is an hermeneutical technique consisting in explaining a word or phrase according to its numerical value of each letter, with some variations in method (See Scholem, Kabbalah, pp. 337-43). The value of both 'elohim and ha-teva' is 86.
8. Ephraim treats elohim as the object of the verb created rather than the subject, reading the words in the order in which they appear. This syntactical possibility, which could be construed to mean that God Himself was a created being, was noted and criticized in the Talmud, Megillah 9a. The Zohar [1:15a] adopts precisely such a reading: "With the beginning the Concealed One who is not known created the palace . . . called Elohim" (Matt, Zohar, pp. 49-50 and note). The Zohar's hermeneutical principle is adopted by Ephraim.

9. In the Sefer Yezirah, a speculative cosmogony written between the third and sixth centuries and of great import to later Kabbalists, the three parallel realms of world or universe, year, and person are affected as God "engraves," "hews," and "combines" the 22 letters of the alphabet. The same letter combination creates different but linked entities in each realm. See the translation and discussion by David Blumenthal, Understanding Jewish Mysticism (New York: KTAV, 1978), 1:31-44; Scholem, Kabbalah, pp. 23-30.
10. ve-yiheyu devarav be-naḥat: possibly referring to Kohelet 9:17: "Words of the wise spoken softly (be-naḥat) are sooner heeded than those shouted by a lord in folly."
11. The translation follows the earlier texts (Korez, Zhitomir). The Jerusalem text has omitted a line as the editor's eye jumped to an identical word immediately below its twin (homoioteleuton).
12. Bereshit Rabba 1:1: "The Torah says, 'I was the instrument of the Blessed Holy One'. . . . God looked into the Torah and created the world . . . as in the verse, 'YHVH made me as the beginning of His way' [Proverbs 8:22]." Cf. Harry A. Wolfson, Philo (Cambridge: Harvard U. Press, 1962), 1:243-5.
13. Koaḥ and po'al were the standard philosophical terms referring respectively to the possibility or readiness of something to receive a known form, and the state of being in that form. The passage from potential to actual states was understood as integral to any movement or development. See Jacob Klatzkin, Thesaurus of Philosophical Terms (Hebrew) (New York: Feldheim, 1968), 2:73.
14. The word wisdom, ḥokhmah, is first divided into koaḥ and mah. See Azriel, who explains that wisdom is "the koaḥ of all that can possibly exist" (mah she'efshar liheyot) (Perush ha-Aggadot, p. 84); see Zohar 3:34a, 235b.

Spelling out mem-he, the value of the four resulting letters is added and found to equal 86 ($m = 40 \times 2 = 80 + h, 5 + a, 1 = 86$). This equals the numerical value of elohim, also 86. This equivalence opens the door to consideration of conceptual and causal relationships, one of which is spelled out by Ephraim in what follows: wisdom is found to be the operative force in dealing with nature.

15. The key word in this passage is yir'ah, which can be translated either as "fear" or "awe." I have used both words here in order to be true to the distinction Ephraim is emphasizing, and to the sense of the passage from Mishnah Avot. Beginning in Biblical piety and continuing with important developments of meaning, yir'ah and 'ahavah, love, are the two basic characteristics of the ideal relationship between humanity and God. See Bernard Bamberger, "Fear and Love of God in the Old Testament," Hebrew Union College Annual 6(1929):39-53.

Among the Spanish Kabbalists of the thirteenth century, and in the Zohar, awe and love came to be associated with the sefirot of "judgment" (din) and "love" (hesed) respectively. The divine name elohim is also connected to the sefirah of din; hence the equivalence between the two assumed by Ephraim. For a discussion of the development of these concepts see Tishby, Mishnat ha-Zohar, pp. 280-97.

16. Ephraim cites two examples from the Talmud in which the order of words in a passage is reversed: Mishnah Avot's two-sided proverb, and the Talmud's report on the changes made by Ptolemy's Biblical translators (who learned their technique, Ephraim suggests, by studying Mishnah!). These examples establish a precedent for inverting the word order as Ephraim does. See note 8 above.
17. These are the four laryngeal consonants in the Hebrew alphabet, the least differentiated in sound, and therefore "interchangeable." Note that Ephraim does not list them in their alphabetical order.
18. The aim of "unifying" God is explained in many passages, including one later in the commentary on this Torah portion. That connection with God can be maintained in seemingly non-sacred conversation is another frequent subject (the natural realm is suggested by the word 'elohim as on p. 75).
19. Ya'akov ben Asher was the author of the fourteenth-century code of law, Arba'ah Turim. He also wrote a commentary on the Torah devoted largely to pointing out the hints in the text -- gematriot and abbreviations such as this -- along with notes of textual clarification and commentary.

20. The use of the past tense here raises questions about how Ephraim wrote his book, and how it may have been edited. See the Introduction, pp. 7-8.
21. The dichotomy of form and matter is prominent in Neoplatonic thought. In the Talmud, form is the opposite of a Greek word for the hylic, primordial, formless. Samuel Dresner notes that in the thought of Ya'akov Yosef of Polnoyye, a dualism of form and matter is found in regard to the individual, the community of Israel, and the world. "'The principal purpose of the creation of man, who was made out of form and matter, is that he should strive all his days to turn matter into form. After he has achieved this in himself, he should endeavor to transform others, for the zaddik is the form or soul of the whole world, while the wicked are the matter or body of the whole world'" (The Zaddik, p. 137, quoting Toledot Ya'akov Yosef, 5c). Ephraim sees the possibility of such purification for the individual; but he also proposes a harmonious relationship between these "principles" in the life of the community. See his commentary to portion Zav, pp. 138-49 below.
22. Ephraim adds interpretive content as he cites the midrash, which relates that the light of the first day, which enabled Adam to "see from one end of the world to the other," was hidden because of future human corruption and reserved "for the righteous in the time to come." See also Bereshit Rabba 3:6, Shemot Rabbah 35:1. The use of this light in every generation is an addition.
23. That this first light was hidden away in the Torah is a teaching also reported in the name of the Ba'al Shem by Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl and Dov Baer of Mezeritsch. The idea may be based on a conflation of the midrashim on the hiding away of the primordial light, above, with that which depicts God as having concealed the Torah itself for 974 generations before deciding to reveal it at Sinai (see Shabbat 88b-89a). (This tradition is related to another which notes that God gave the Torah after 26 generations; see Bereshit Rabba 1:10, 28:4.) Reports of the Ba'al Shem seeing what is occurring in other places by opening the Zohar are found in 'Or ha-Meir, Me'or Einayim, and Shivhei ha-Besht. See Ben Amos and Mintz, ed., In Praise of the Ba'al Shem Tov [Shivhei ha-Besht], pp. 48-49, 89-90; and Sefer Ba'al Shem Tov, 1:22a-24a, and note 23 on p. 22b. Note that in Ephraim's report, the Ba'al Shem has to ask what it was his brother-in-law was doing outside the Holy Land;

whether or not the Zohar was involved in this instance is not mentioned.

24. Both phrases have the numerical value 613, the traditional number of commandments in the Torah.
25. The Talmud, asking about the meaning of Ecc. 12:13, "this is the whole of man," here describes one who has attained the end of humankind, one who is "equal" in value "to the entire world" -- a perfected human being. Ephraim interprets "such a one" (zeh) as the zaddik.
26. Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai is identified as the Sabbath in Zohar 3:144b (see the translation in Matt, Zohar, p. 169). There, however, the Sabbath is related to the sefirah Binah. Throughout the Zohar, zaddik is a designation of the ninth sefirah, the phallus of the sefirotic body, yesod, which channels light and power to the last sefirah, Malkhut or Shekhinah, and which connects the King (Tiferet) and the Shekhinah in divine union. Since it is characterized by absence of its own particular activity, Shekhinah is usually identified with the Sabbath; however, the Sabbath is also seen as a symbol of yesod (See Scholem, Kabbalah, p. 108). Malkhut is also symbolized as the community of Israel. The real and symbolic activities of bringing together community and God, Shekhinah and Tiferet, and the erotic dimension of these unions, are all associated with the zaddik.
27. "In the light of a king's face there is life" (Proverbs 16:15). See below, p. 309.
28. 'Elohim is the divine name associated with the sefirah of Din (Judgment), the source, if not in proper balance with Hesed (Love) of the destructive forces of judgment. The arrival and welcoming of the Sabbath, Shekhinah, initiates the divine union, which restores harmony among the sefirot, and is the fount of all blessing. The passage from the Zohar to which Ephraim refers is translated, with notes explaining the Zohar's understanding of Sabbath, by Matt, Zohar, p. 132.
29. Kal va-homer is a basic hermeneutical principle of Rabbinic interpretation: inferring that the same logic applies in two analogous instances, most commonly from a less to a more obvious case. See Moses Mielziner, Introduction to the Talmud (New York: Bloch, 1968), pp. 130-41.

30. The midrash in Sotah relates that Joseph went in to satisfy his desire with Potiphar's wife, but as she caught him by his garment, his father's image appeared to him through a window and spoke to him, and "his passion subsided." Cf. Bereshit Rabba 87:7. The yezer, or inclination, is a term of rabbinic anthropology (cf. Genesis 8:21). The individual is understood to have both an evil and a good inclination vying for his control. One who is wise is one who has overcome his [evil] yezer. Ephraim treats this dimension of personal struggle fully below, pp. 243-46.

31. Numbers 11:34: "That place was named Kivrot ha-ta'avah, because the people who lusted were buried there." Literally, the words mean "graves of lust" or "craving." I have not located the reference in Berit Menuḥah. The process by which wisdom displaces and puts an end to the body's craving is briefly described in what follows; see Va-'Ethannan, p. 224, Selections, p. 310.

32. Holiness is identified with Hokhmah in Zohar 2:121a; see below, pp. 256-57.

33. The sefirah of wisdom, Hokhmah, is the father, whose seed is sown in Binah, the supernal mother; the emanating sefirot are born from their union. See Zohar 3:290a (Idra Zuta).

34. That a person is "found" in the place to which he connects his thought is a teaching of the Ba'al Shem Tov. The background of this idea is the kabbalistic notion of the interrelatedness of the divine realm of emanation and the interior life of the soul. The pattern of the sefirot above establishes the pattern of life below; and the microcosm of the soul replicates the divine (see above, p. 76). Therefore one can connect oneself to particular dimensions of the divine realm in contemplation. One's contemplation and action also arouse the divine realm and cause its blessing to descend: "The impulse from below calls forth that from above" (Zohar 1:64a). See Fine, "Kabbalistic Texts," Back to the Sources, pp. 327-29; Scholem, Symbolism, pp. 122-28; Tishby, Mishnat ha-Zohar, 2:3-10.

35. See Tikkunei Zohar, 21 (61b). Wisdom is called the Father, as the first seed, or "Beginning," of emanation. The "Daughter" of the divine Mother (Binah) and Father is the Shekhinah; Shekhinah is also identified as "Earth" waiting to be brought back into union with "Heaven," Tif'eret.

36. Attachment to wisdom, the father, brings about fulfillment of God's will. Thus, through wisdom, Abraham can observe the entire Torah before it is given (see p. 162 below). Similarly, God's intention that the grasses grow according to their kinds comes about as an inevitable consequence of the presence of wisdom. In sefirotic terms, Shekhinah, the "daughter," is brought into being and sustained through the action of the father: wisdom is the principle of "establishment" both in the sense of creation and in the sense of rightly ordering what already exists.
37. Ta'aleh deyokna shel abba. On "raising" speech to the realm of thought, see p. 173.
38. Zohar 1:26b; explained by Scholem, Symbolism, p. 58.
39. Several lines preceding this, the Gemara, commenting on Psalm 45:5, notes that those who act in humility merit the Torah, "which was given by the right hand." The identification of those who "go to the right hand" with those who study li-shemah is made by Rashi, loc. cit.
40. Adding together the numerical value of YHVH (the divine name applied to Tif'eret) and Adonai (the name related to Malkhut), $26 + 65 = 91$. The value of pi is 90, which, with the "one inclusive," representing the word itself, is therefore equivalent.
41. The left side of the sefirotic body is that associated with the powers of judgment. In the Zohar, separation of the power of judgment, Din, from the power of love, Hesed, and the resultant unrestrained growth of Din produces the domain of evil, the "other side" (sitra agra). The sitra agra is also viewed as a semi-autonomous emanation "of the left." See Scholem, Kabbalah, pp. 122-25. The Biblical reference to "good," therefore, must mean the right. Presumably those who "go to the left" are those who do not focus on unifying the divine, cleaving instead to the other side (see Zohar 2:11a-b, translated in Matt, Zohar, p. 100).
42. Again the emphasis is on unification: here the text is understood as an allusion to joining the attributes of love and awe -- the sefirot of Hesed and Gevurah -- in one's study. On the colors associated with specific sefirot see Zohar 1:50b-51b, 2:23a-b; Matt, Zohar, p. 166 and notes, pp. 282-83; Scholem, Judaica, 3:98-151. See also the final teaching to this portion, and Tishby, Mishnat ha-Zohar, 1:151-153, 171-176.

43. The identity of the consonants in shoham and mosheh is highlighted to point out the close connection between study for its own sake and the attainment of da'at, which is knowledge, one of the three "divine intelligences" along with wisdom (Hokhmah) and understanding (Binah). In earlier Kabbalah, Da'at appears occasionally as one of the ten sefirot, and more often as a mediating principle between Hokhmah and Binah ("the external aspect of Keter," Scholem, Kabbalah, p. 107). See the introduction, pp. 53-55.
44. Both have a numerical value of 340.
45. This interpretation is based on the last four words of the verse taken in isolation, nefesh hayyah hu' shemo, which can mean "the soul of a living creature is its name." The verse recounts Adam's naming of the animals: "whatever the man called each living creature, that would be its name." This particular re-reading is repeatedly attributed by Ephraim to Nahman, whereas other Hasidic teachers cite it in the name of the Ba'al Shem. See Sefer Ba'al Shem Tov, 1:45a-b. "I heard from my teacher that as one takes hold of his body through physical means, so grasping the soul is by means of speaking one's name. In the case of one who sleeps, as well: he is awakened from his sleep by calling his name" (Toledot Ya'akov Yosef, 42d).
46. Here we hear the counterpoint to the theme of unification: study for its own sake involves not only joining, in devekut, but also separating good from evil; lifting up the holy sparks deprives the realm of evil of its life. See the Introduction, p. 52. Ephraim speaks not only of purification, as here, but also of the transformation of evil into good; see pp. 277-78 below.
47. Manhir 'einayim de-mishtadlin bah. This phrase combines a number of references, including "The mizvot of YHWH are pure, enlightening the eyes" (Psalm 19:8). The verbal form used, manhir, may refer to Shabbat 147b, "he enlightens the eyes of the wise in halakhah." The Zohar repeatedly speaks of those who "exert themselves in the Torah" (see for example Zohar 3:160b, 216b).
48. This parenthesis, one of only a handful in the text, is found in all editions. Does it indicate a secondary interpretation on Ephraim's part, or an afterthought set off by Ephraim amidst his recording of a recently delivered sermon? Is it a gloss by Ephraim's son and

editor? In any case, it is closely related to what follows, in which the identical verbs of illumining are used.

49. Regarding the concepts of tikkun and elevation, and how they are brought about, see the Introduction, pp. 47-53. Note here the central role of teaching and of devekut in the zaddik's ability to effect tikkun.
50. The Shekhinah is "poor," dalah, when separated from Tif'eret: "She has nothing at all of her own" (Zohar 1:181a). To "have compassion" for the Shekhinah is to pray or study with the intention of re-establishing their divine union, through which she is filled.
51. David "makes" the holy name by joining the oral and written Torah, Shekhinah and the Blessed Holy One. See also Zohar 1:116b, which in reference to this verse from 2 Samuel, explains that "one who strives in the Torah is as if he made and mended that time [i.e., the Shekhinah], to join her to the Blessed Holy One." On the identification of the name of God and the Torah, see Scholem, Symbolism, pp. 37-44.
52. Earlier versions of this midrash, varying somewhat in detail, are found in Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer 19, Be-Midbar Rabbah 14:12.
53. The sefirot are understood as the progressive manifestation both of the names of God, and of the name YHVH. Shekhinah, the final sefirah, is usually identified with the name Adonai and with the final he which completes the Tetragrammaton.
54. See Zohar 3:6a-b.
55. On the interdependence of Israel and the Shekhinah, see Tishby, Mishnat ha-Zohar, 1:226-228.
56. The point of the midrash is that creation did not involve physical effort. The letter he "demands no effort" to pronounce, and thus it was "not with labor or wearying toil" that God created, but "by the word of God" [Psalm 33:16]. Ephraim takes the he of the infinitive as a reference to Torah, which is made up of five (he) books, and was often mentioned as the instrument of creation (see Avot 3:14, and note 9 above). The explicit connection of this he and the "word of God" in the sense of the Torah is not, to my knowledge, made in the Zohar or in the earlier midrash.

57. See below, pp. 110-11.
58. A variant reading of the midrash; see Theodor Albeck, ed., Bereshit Rabba (Jerusalem, Wahrmann, 1965), 1:432. Cf. Zohar 1:90b, where the change in Abraham's life is related to his no longer believing in the stars and fates. Bereshit Rabba 44:12 explains that the changing of one's name is one of the things that void a decree, citing the fruitfulness that followed the change of name with Abraham and Sarah. Again, the explicit identification of the added he with the Torah is Ephraim's.
59. The Masoretes marked this as the half-way point of the Torah in terms of the number of words; see Kiddushin 30a. Ephraim confuses words with letters, and continues to refer to letters throughout the passage.
60. The oral Torah as necessary completion of the written Torah, both having been received by Moses at Sinai, are ideas rooted in Rabbinic tradition. See Urbach, the Sages, pp. 286-314. These "two Torahs" were identified by the kabbalists with the sefirot Tif'eret (written Torah) and Shekhinah (oral Torah). See Scholem, Symbolism, pp. 47-50.
61. "If the guilty one [in a dispute] is to be flogged . . . he may be given up to forty lashes, but not more" (Deuteronomy 25:2). The Rabbinic reduction of the number is discussed in Makkot 22a-b.
62. Sanhedrin 99a: "One who says that the Torah is not from heaven, and even one who says that the entire Torah is from heaven except for this verse [or] except for a certain kal va-ḥomer, such a one 'has spurned the word of the Lord' [Numbers 15:31]." Such a person has no share in the world-to come.
63. In the Rabbinic period, later interpretation (and also prophecy) were viewed as already included in the Sinaitic revelation. "All the sages that have arisen in every generation received their respective teaching from Sinai" [Shemot Rabbah 28:6]. See Urbach, The Sages, pp. 300, 394 (and note 59 there). The idea that the Torah is expounded according to a generation's needs and character ("root") is basic to Ephraim's understanding of the role of the interpreter/zaddik, and is rooted in the 16th-century Kabbalah of Safed. Cordovero stressed the idea that each holy soul of Israel had its own special portion in the Torah, "and to none other than he, whose soul springs from thence,

will it be given to understand it" (Scholem, Symbolism, p. 65).

64. See p. 267, below, a selection from portion Va'era, in which Ephraim mentions having seen this idea in a holy book, "perhaps" Berit Menuḥah.
65. The Jerusalem edition omits all but the first phrase of this sentence, which is complete in all other editions.
66. Referring, evidently, to the previous argument, that the verse in Genesis simply identifies the source of David's years.
67. The abbreviation here underlines the formulaic and condensed quality of these introductory phrases, which bear the markings of a literary convention "inherited" from the tradition of Biblical commentary.
68. Talmud Yerushalmi, Peah 2:6. Cf. Yerushalmi Yevamot 4:1: "R. Akiba had a distinguished student who knew how to interpret the Torah in 49 ways to prove anything clean. It was said: that student is a piece of the rock of Sinai."
69. Cf. Zohar 1:4b; Sanhedrin 99b.
70. Ha-'adam is the referent of all the verses Ephraim brings together here (Genesis 5:1, 1:27, 5:2) to make the point that God's creative power, rooted in Torah, is shared by those who also make use of Torah. The Talmud states, "If the righteous wished, they could create a world" [Sanhedrin 65b], yet the statement is illustrated by legends of rabbis who create an artificial man and a calf, seemingly by magic. Midrash Tehillim on Psalm 3 states that "had the chapters of the Torah been given in their correct order, anyone who read them might create a world, raise the dead, and perform miracles."
71. The zaddikim, in their innovation in Torah, are the vehicle of God's constant renewal of creation, and also the soul of its people. Note that this ability appears to be available to ha-'adam, according to the preceding paragraph, raising the question of who could be included in the category of zaddik.
72. Zohar 3:216b. The principle emerging from the discussion there is stated thus: "Anyone who exerts himself in the Torah removes from himself the control of the stars and planets."

73. The kabbalists of the thirteenth century interpreted the doctrine of creatio ex nihilo to mean that everything had its origin in the nothingness, 'ayin', of God. 'Ayin' is usually identified with the first sefirah, Keter. Emanation is thus characterized as Nothingness becoming I ('ayin le-ani'). See Scholem, Kabbalah, pp. 94-95, 110; Matt, Zohar, p. 147.

In this passage, wisdom no longer appears as being derived from 'ayin', but as identical to it. "In Hasidic thought, this Sefirah [i.e., Wisdom] is called ayin, 'Nothingness,' because of this stage of the divine process nothing can be said" (Jacobs, Hasidic Prayer, p. 78.). Jacobs' comment is based on one passage from Keter Shem Tov, but applies to the thought of Dov Baer of Mezeritch and of Ephraim. In Dov Baer's teaching it is much more clearly stated than in any of Ephraim's homilies that human ascent to the realm of Hokhmah is equated with self-annihilation. See R. Schatz, "Contemplative Prayer in Hasidism," Studies in Mysticism and Religion Presented to Gershom G. Scholem, ed. Ephraim E. Urbach, et al. (Jerusalem, Magnes Press, 1967); and below p.

74. Hamshakhot ve-hashpa'ot. These terms are pivotal to the kabbalistic understanding of both the divine and the divine-human economies. Were it not for human sin, and the disruptive separation it introduces, all of the worlds would function in harmony, transmitting the "flow" (shefa') of divine blessing downward to human-kind and physical creation, and upward from below. In the Zohar, this separation is located as that between the "Community of Israel," the Shekhinah, and her husband, which prevents the shefa' from descending below, thus resulting in God's blessings being withheld from Israel and creation. When, through righteous action and prayer, Israel bring about the union of the Blessed Holy One and his Shekhinah, the flow of blessings is restored. See Tishby, Mishnat ha-Zohar, 1:226-231.

But human activity does more than affect the divine realm; by establishing a connection with a certain aspect of the divine, it is also able to "draw forth" (mashakh) that aspect to bear on life here below.

75. The word translated here as "intelligence" is mohin, a term derived from Lurianic Kabbalah, where it refers to Hokhmah, Binah, and Da'at. These three aspects of

"mind" develop organically, and reflect the growth and completion of Ze'ir Anpin (the manifestation, or parzuf, of the six sefirot from Hesed to Yesod) in the process of cosmic restoration. In the period of "gestation" ('Ibbur), the intelligence Da'at is absent, and the other two do not function. In the period of "immaturity" (katnut), the intelligences are weak as in the mind of a young child, and Da'at is not complete. In "maturity" (gadlut), the three mohin are complete and revealed, to be received by "the female of Ze'ir," Malkhut. See Tishby, Torat ha-Ra' ve-ha-Kelipah be-Kabbalat ha-AR'I (Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1942), p. 146; and Scholem, Kabbalah, pp. 140-42.

76. Homiletically, Ephraim is providing further motivation to seek devekut: it leads to freedom from fate, and to "children, length of life, and sustenance."
77. See note 3 above. It should also be noted that the literal Hebrew of this formula reads "248 'thou shalt' mizvot and 365 'thou shalt not' mizvot" -- language which is at once closer to the Biblical text and more personal than my translation.
78. See S. M. Stern, "'The First in Thought is the Last in Action': The History of a Saying Attributed to Aristotle," Journal of Semitic Studies 7 (1962), pp. 234-251 (and sources cited in note 1, p. 251); Tishby, Mishnat ha-Zohar, 2:483. Cf. Kohelet Rabbah on Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) 2:14.
79. Since the Torah is the instrumentality of creation, and the human being is the essence of Torah, all of creation depends on humankind. Cf. pp. 221-23 below, regarding Israel's role in maintaining the existence of the worlds. The midrashic referent, to which Ephraim turns next, recounts that it was not until God saw that Israel would accept the Torah that he decided to allow the creation to exist.
80. "I am YHVH your God" and "You shall have no other Gods before me" contain all other commandments, and are themselves sufficient for the wise to understand God's will. See pp. 153-58 below.
81. The Zohar relates the hidden primeval light to the divine zaddik (yesod), who is the gardener in the Edenic garden and who sows truth, from which "shoots" grow (2:166b-167a). Another passage depicts Abraham's light as having been stored away for him by God (2:220b); and another describes how a ray of this

primordial light is sown to sustain and renew creation each day (2:148b, translated in Matt, Zohar, pp. 52-53). This primordial light is also identified as "white light" which the eye cannot use [2:78b]. Ephraim has synthesized these images with others relating specific colors of light and particular patriarchs to each sefirah. See Tishby, Mishnat ha-Zohar, 1:151-153. The result is a reinterpretation of Bereshit Rabba 3:6, stating that the light is hidden away for the zaddikim: the hiding of the primordial light in the Torah is actually like a sowing, and from each of the Torah's mizvot, which are like seeds bearing the germ of this light, spring zaddikim.

82. R. Yosef asks the son of Rabbah this question in the context of a discussion of observances worthy of reward.
83. White is the color of Hesed, love, and red of Din, judgment; black is the color of Malkhut when the influx of blessing from above has been eclipsed through human sin. Green is the color of Tif'eret; the union of Shekhinah and Tif'eret is also expressed as the "mixing" of colors. On colors and the eye in a different context in the Zohar, see Matt, Zohar, pp. 107-10.
84. The reason Noah merits Hesed is that he has performed tikkun, realigning himself with the root of his soul as revealed in his name. On the identity of soul and name see note 45.

NOTES: YITRO

1. The image of the perennial spring is a traditional title applied to a scholar, derived from this passage and Mishnah Avot 2:11.
2. See Zohar 2:99 a-b, translated with notes by Matt, Zohar, pp. 124-125: The lover of Torah increases in intimacy with her until becoming her husband, from whom she withholds none of her secrets. On Moses as the husband of the Shekhinah ("Oral Torah") see Tishby, Mishnat ha-Zohar, 2:191-192.
3. Be-Midbar Rabbah 12:8 relates this verse to Exodus 31:8 because both share a form of kallot: the revelation at Sinai is the wedding ceremony between God and Israel, and the mishkan testifies to this union. I have cited the final explanatory sentence as it is rendered by Rashi, loc. cit. According to Pesikta de Rav Kahana 1:1, Moses was the zaddik who succeeded in bringing Shekhinah back to earth. The Zohar adapts this verse from Numbers to speak of the marriage of Moses and Shekhinah; see Matt, Zohar, p. 130.
4. One interpreter flings the name of Moses at another as if to say, "A person as wise as you -- like Moses in your generation -- saying such a thing!" Ephraim is not interested in the statement's tone, but only in its identification of one who has knowledge with Moses. On the relationship of Moses and Da'at, see pp. 286-87.
5. A three-stage interpretation of the verse and the passage from Avot: First, interpreting "the teaching of faithfulness" (torat hesed) as identifying hesed to be the nature of the Torah (see Sukkah 49b); then reiterating that one who studies Torah properly becomes a perennial spring (his "tongue" or teaching does not dry up); and finally alluding to the unstated image of drawing water out of a spring, and the Zoharic symbol of hesed as water, to define the proper student's role as one who waters the world with hesed.

The sefirah of Hesed is symbolized in the Zohar as water, and that of Din as fire. In harmony these two

principles are the basis of the creation, but they may be set in opposition, especially by human sin which causes the powers of judgment to overcome and to stop up the flow of blessing to the world. On this tension and its various manifestations in the Zohar, see Tishby, Mishnat ha-Zohar, 1:268-70.

6. "Sweetening" the forces of din at their "root" is a common phrase referring to the balancing or mixing of divine judgment (din) and love (hesed) necessary for the continued flow of divine bounty (shefa'). The "root" of din is the sefirah Binah; the joining of hesed and din is elsewhere described as a contemplative lifting up of din (pp. 173, 255), or a discovery of hesed within din (p. 199).
7. Li-shemah is interpreted as le-shem he, "for the sake of he," in Tikkunei Zohar, Hakdamah, 2a, a pre-Lurianic book. He is the Shekhinah (see Balak, p. 173). The Ari, or "Lion," is R. Isaac Luria, originator of a startlingly mythic revision of the Kabbalah (see Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, pp. 244-86; Kabbalah, pp. 128-44). Luria wrote little; his teaching was made public in a number of differing versions by major disciples such as Hayyim Vital, Moses Jonah, and Israel Sarug (see Scholem, Kabbalah, pp. 74-78), and through the genre of kabbalistic ethical books.
8. "R. Israel Ba'al Shem, may he rest in peace, said . . . that in every letter [of Torah or prayer] there are worlds and souls and divinity. They ascend and are connected and become united with each other, with divinity; and then the letters are united and linked together and form a word, and afterwards true unifications are unified. The individual has to include his soul in each aspect of those mentioned, and then all the worlds are united as one, and they ascend and become a great joy and delight" (Zavva'at ha-Ribash, 8b). This is a key idea of the Ba'al Shem. See Sefer Ba'al Shem Tov, pp. 61b-64a ('Amud ha-Tefillah), and below, pp. 126-27. On "attachment to the letters" as a technique of prayer in Hasidism, see Jacobs, Hasidic Prayer, pp. 74-79.
9. Yitro and ha-Torah both have a value of 616.
10. In the Zohar, the sefirah of Hesed is identified as the priest in the tabernacle of Binah; and, as Tishby notes, the priest, "through the power of Hesed which is contained in [his] spiritual level, removes the powers of judgment from the Shekhinah," particularly by uniting

the opposing forces of the divine realm. See Mishnat ha-Zohar, 201-4.

11. The Torah scroll is written without vowel signs, and thus h-t-n can be read in a number of ways. This fact must be included among the factors that led to "the principle of the infinite meanings of the Torah" in Kabbalah discussed by Scholem, Symbolism, pp. 50-65.
12. Study for its own sake, li-shemah, is equated with Moses' unmediated reception of the Torah in all of its aspects. The consonants of the name Moses (Mosheh) are identical with those of shemah; this pun is frequent (see above, pp. 88-89, 97).
13. 'Avodah = 87 and 'elohim = 86. Elohim is the divine name equated with the sefirah of Din, "Judgment", an association derived in part from earlier midrashim equating YHVH with the attribute of compassion and Elohim with the attribute of judgment; for example: "Elohim everywhere means nothing else but Judge" (Mekhilta de R. Ishmael, Va-Yehi, 4). See Be-Reshit, n. 15. The conversion of judgment into lovingkindness (hesed) is inferred from "priest of Midian", kohen mi (from) din, as in the previous passage.
14. See Degel Maḥane Ephraim, portion Be-Shallah, p. 64, and elsewhere.
15. Ephraim combines pieces of quotations that would have been familiar to his audience: "All is vanity. What profit (yitron) is there for a man in all his toil . . .?" (Kohelet 1:2-3). "In the hour of one's departure, neither silver nor gold...accompany one, but only Torah and good deeds" (Mishnah Avot 6:9). Note that the connection between Yitro and Yitron in the verse from Kohelet is totally taken for granted in Ephraim's homily.
16. Shemot Rabbah 19.7 urges the observance of Passover on the basis of the seven days "between the redemption and the dividing of the sea" which correspond to the seven days of creation.
17. Bereshit Rabba 1:4: "The world and all it contains were created only for the sake of the Torah"; 1:1: "there is no reshit other than the Torah"; 1.5: "The intention to create Israel preceded everything else. . . ."
18. According to Rabbinic midrashim, Moses receives both the written and oral Torah at Sinai. See Be-Reshit, notes

- 59 and 62. In the Zohar, Moses attains the level of Tif'eret, the Written Torah, and is united with Shekhinah, the Oral Torah. This union is equated with Torah being transmitted through him. See Zohar 2:11b (translated by Matt, Zohar, pp. 100-01).
19. Ephraim may be referring to interpretations of what "Jethro heard" that led him to become a Jew. See Louis Ginzberg, The Legends of the Jews (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1954), 3:65-6.
 20. The word 'ammo, "his people," refers in the biblical passage to God's people, but it can just as easily be read as a reference to Moses' people. Ephraim adopts this reading.
 21. Moses is the head of the body Israel, all the parts of which are thus attached to him. This image of Israel as an organism with a single destiny, for even the lowliest members of which the head is responsible, has its roots in Rabbinic midrashim (see Urbach, The Sages, pp. 539-41), and was intensified by the kabbalistic conception of the Community of Israel as not only an historical but a mystical body whose members were the limbo of the Shekhinah (Scholem, Symbolism, pp. 47, 106). This image and its implications for a leader were applied to the rebuker (mokhiah) in the homiletical and moral literature contemporaneous with the appearance of Hasidism, and to the zaddik in the writings of early Hasidic authors such as Ya'akov Yosef and Ephraim. See Piekarz, Be-Ymei Zemi'at ha-Hasidut, pp. 105-12; Dresner, The Zaddik, pp. 137-41.
 22. Ephraim substitutes "the second" for the Biblical wording, "the other."
 23. In other words, this phrase also refers to an event, albeit in the past, in which the deliverance of God is present and instrumental.
 24. Hesed is also the sefirah of "Greatness"; Gevurah ("Power") is the sefirah associated with fear. The sefirah Tiferet is identified with Jacob and called the attribute of truth. Note that "those at the lowest levels who do not have a mind like yours" might also be understood to mean "who do not have mo'in" --i.e., Hokhmah, Binah, and Da'at -- "as you do".
 25. In other words, Moses has the powers of chiromancy. See Zohar 2:70 a-b (Raza de-Razin); Scholem, Kabbalah, p. 215 (on Raza de-Razin), and 317-19 (on Chiromancy).

26. Literally, "speak Torah to him". The emphasis on personal verbal communication revealed here adds to the picture of the kind of learning situation favored in Hasidic circles. See the Introduction, pp. 11-13.
27. The terms katnut and gadlut refer, in Lurianic thought, to stages in the completion of the process of tikkun or mending, which takes place not only in the divine realm but also in the individual and historically in the world (See Be-Reshit, n. 74). As is clear in what follows and elsewhere, for Ephraim the state of katnut involves a loss or lack of connection with God, which is fully present in the higher state of gadlut (see Dan, The Teachings of Hasidism, p. 25; Scholem, The Messianic Idea in Judaism, pp. 219-22). Thus the terms' multiple implications invite a variety of translations in addition to my choice of the literal "smallness" and "greatness": "immaturity" and "maturity", "small-mindedness" and "expanded mind", "lesser and greater states", etc. This teaching addresses an evident concern to determine the exact spiritual condition of a teacher before receiving from him, by describing a position called "standing" which is more stable because it acknowledges that the katnut of one on a higher level is a relative matter, not cancelling the value of his attainment. See the Introduction, p. 31-33.
28. When God gave the Torah to Israel, all the princes of the world heard God's voice and feared another flood. They consulted Balaam, who explained: "God has a good treasure in His treasure-house, which was hidden away with Him 974 generations before the world was created, and He is requesting to give it to his children. For it is written, 'May God give strength to His people.' Immediately, they all spoke and said, 'May God bless his people with peace' [Psalm 29:11]" (Zevachim 116a). Peace is Torah.
29. The verse is thus interpreted as offering encouragement: God will give strength to enable the attainment of a constant level of knowledge so that his people will receive the peace of Torah. The tantalizing question is, who is it to whom Ephraim addresses the hope of this attainment: Any one of the people? One who is already a teacher?
30. Rooted in earlier Rabbinic and kabbalistic teachings, this was a common idea in the literature of the period and earlier. "The 600,000 souls of all Israel are bound up with each other as this cord that is woven becomes

like one, without separation. . . . Therefore an individual may sin, but He is angry with the entire congregation" (Reshit Hokhmah, Gate of Awe, ch. 14, 49a). "Anyone who does not assent to Israel's oneness with each other as one person, denies the existence of God, because he also does not affirm that every soul of Israel is a portion of God from above" (Elijah ben Moshe Gershon, Hadrat Eliyahu 9a). This last was published by a non-Hasidic writer in Prague in 1785, one of the years during which Ephraim was writing this book. See note 16 above, especially Piekarz.

31. The vowel-sign segol is written below, and the intonation-marking segolta above, the letter to which each applies; both are needed for a word to be chanted correctly.
32. The mutual usefulness of the various "degrees" within Israel, and the manner in which their behavior arouses response in the divine realm, are clarified in Ephraim's commentary to portion Zav, pp. 140-48 below. The increase of sanctity involved in having concern for the people is treated by Samuel Dresner in his discussion of the descent of the zaddik as presented by Ya'akov Yosef of Polnoyye (The Zaddik, pp. 148-55).
33. For Ephraim, as for earlier kabbalists, the chief aim of human behavior is to perfect the cosmos through restoring the unity within the divine realm. Every activity either increases the forces of separation or brings the realms of the sefirot (or parzufim in Lurianic thought) closer to unification. Unity within the Community of Israel, which is closely identified with the Shekhinah, thus arouses the divine union of God and Shekhinah above.
34. In all editions before that of 1962, the following appears in the first section of collected teachings which presents additional materials by the Torah portion to which they belong. The reason such additions were not originally included in the body of the commentary is unclear. I have included it here primarily because of the contrast offered to the preceding derash.
35. After the destruction of the place in which He was revealed, God can reveal himself only where the halakhah of the Torah is studied.
36. The source of these interpretive comments of Maimonides remains to be traced.

37. The identification of awe with the four cubits of the halakhah is based on the fact that both are referred to as the sole possession of God. This exegesis emphasizes the central importance of yirah, awe.
38. The phrase "peoples of the earth", 'ammei ha-'aretz, has a double meaning, since it was employed widely in the Rabbinic period and after to refer to the ignorant, unobservant, empty or brutish person. See E. E. Urbach, The Sages, pp. 583-92.
39. Thus, the central function of the cosmos is the study of Torah in awe, and "those who are inferior" mentioned in the previous teaching seem to exist primarily to make this possible. See Zav, p. 143.
40. 'Or ha-Hayyim is a commentary to the Torah written by R. Hayyim N. Attar (1696-1743) in 'Erez Yisrael, and first published in Venice in 1742. It was popular among the Hasidim: according to Hasidic legend, the Ba'al Shem wanted to go to Israel to study with Attar. Cf. Dan Manor, "Rabbi Hayyim Ben Attar in Hasidic Writings" (Hebrew), Pe'amin 20(1984):88-110. 'Or ha-Hayyim is included in many editions of Mikraot Gedolot, the Hebrew Bible published together with Targumim, Rashi, and other commentaries.
41. A literal rendering of the text here would read: "that the word yourself refers to the individual's personality; likewise any likeness also undoubtedly refers to the individual's personality."
42. Ephraim adds ones who are wise to the two categories which the Zohar mentions as being the face of Shekhinah. His inspiration might be Tanhuma, Tissa', 27: "One who welcomes the wise is as he who welcomes Shekhinah." See also Zohar 2:38a (and R. Margoliot's note 3 there); 2:94b.
43. See Zohar 1:9a, 3:115b, 298a; Zohar Hadash, Be-Reshit, 1a. Cf. Jerusalem Talmud, Eruvin 5:1, 22b.
44. The Hebrew preposition be can mean both among and within, opening the way for this interpretation. For a fuller homily on this verse from Numbers, see Balak, pp. 189-90 below.
45. Everyone is created "in the image of God" and has within him this unchanging human reality; but some make themselves worthy to have the Shekhinah dwell within them and thereby move into more direct connection with God.

The operative distinction here is between mere resemblance and identity.

46. These sentences afford insight into the question of whether Ephraim's teaching is best understood as primarily oral or written in nature. The sentence beginning "I have also trusted" is clearly an appeal to readers to think back on what has come previously. On the other hand, the preceding sentence with its awkward second clause -- 'akh she-'ein 'anu ka-'et ba-derush hazeh -- suggests oral communication. The implication might be that the acts of writing and reading were understood as continuous with, and to be entered into in the same spirit as, preaching and hearing. As for the matter of "early figs and first fruits", decoding must await the "extended clarification" which time did not permit Ephraim to give.
47. This is a literal rendering of the verse, in the spirit of the interpretation, which turns on the apparent incongruity between sound and sight.
48. Kohelet 2:2. This quotation in the deaf person's mouth brings with it all the worldly cynicism of Kohelet: here is a person who may be a scholar, since he is quoting Scripture, but who does not expect to find anything new under the sun.
49. The text actually quotes Psalm 68:13: "The kings (melakhim) of the armies, they flee, they flee," yet it is clear that this verse is cited because of its use as a proof text in a Talmudic discussion of what occurred at Mount Sinai (Shabbat 88b). Each word from the mouth of the Blessed Holy One caused Israel to be pushed away from the mount by a distance of 12 mil; but the angels (mal'akhim) helped them walk back so that they could hear the next. The midrash concludes with the verse from Psalms, telling us to read not "they flee," but "they led them" (i.e., walked them back).
50. An unexpected interpretation, since in Exodus itself and in the midrash Israel does hear. Moreover, on this same verse, Meir of Berditchev, in Keter Torah (Zhitomir, 1806) attributes to the Ba'al Shem the teaching that if Israel makes itself holy in the Torah and mizvot, "they constantly hear the voice of God speaking, as when they stood at Sinai" (Sefer Ba'al Shem Tov, Yitro #57, 2:30b). In Ephraim's interpretation, Israel does not yet hear, but does perceive the desirability of the Torah.

51. The midrash in Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah 1:2, recounts that upon hearing the second Command from God's mouth, the evil impulse was removed from them, but was returned to its place when they requested Moses to be their intermediary.
52. In a comment on Numbers 14:16, in Berakhot 32a, Moses comes before God and tells him that the other nations are saying that He -- God -- has become as "weak as a woman". Earlier (ibid.) it is related that Moses loses his strength when Israel sins with the calf, and is unable to speak until God says, "Leave me alone and I will destroy them" (Deuteronomy 9:14), whereupon Moses realizes his responsibility and prays to God to save Israel. Note that for Ephraim, the sin that causes Moses' weakness, rather than the calf, is not listening to God's word directly.
53. See Pesikta Rabbati 22:3; Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah 1:2.
54. The Torah can still accomplish the transmission of God's vitality, despite the fact that Israel missed the opportunity to avoid sin altogether by not listening directly. Or to put it the other way around, the mizvot are an alternative way to reach the eternal life that the people missed by not receiving direct revelation.
55. Adopting the three-fold division of the soul from Neoplatonism, the Zohar describes them hierarchically: nefesh, the common denominator of all human beings; ruah, aroused in the course of one's ascent out of materiality; and neshamah, which is most intimately connected with the divine source and with the ability to mystically apprehend and be in communion with God. Later Kabbalists also spoke of two higher degrees of the soul, called hayyah ("living") and yehidah ("only"--cf. Psalm 22:21, 35:17). These are the five "names" of the soul noted in Devarim Rabbah 2:37. All of these degrees of the soul are variously related to the upper realms. See Scholem, Kabbalah, pp. 155-60; Tishby, Mishnat ha-Zohar, 2:3-42. Here the ascending hierarchy of the soul is related to the "mystery" of the ark's three decks. From other sources (particularly Degel Ma'ane Ephraim, Noah, p. 9), we know that the Ba'al Shem is said to have related these three decks to three levels, which were to be found in each word of Torah or prayer: "worlds", "souls", and "divinity". The basic idea of these parallel "secrets" is that one can ascend from rung to rung -- from the ordinary condition of one's nefesh, one can come into contact with God's "nefesh", "divinity." A technique for such ascent is

- that of attaching oneself to the letters; see note 8 above.
56. See Be-Reshit, p. 73, and the first teaching in this section, p. 107. Both refer to the power inherent in Torah to positively alter nature and the powers of judgment, and relate this power either to Wisdom or Hesed. These themes are explicitly drawn together in Ephraim's discussion of Abraham, who is identified with the sefirah of Hesed and attains the entire Torah from the first two commands alone. See pp. 154-58 below.
 57. The direct connection with God is lost through misplaced attention, which is symbolized by those who watched the pyrotechnics at Sinai rather than attaching themselves to the divine word. However, the righteous can still attach themselves to that word in devekut (see p. 137 below) and bring God's very vitality into their lives and teaching.
 58. The distinction of these two experiences of prayer, and the expression of a realistic preference for an approach that is replicable, takes on added significance in light of the varied approaches to preparation for prayer to be found within the early Hasidic community. See Jacobs, Hasidic Prayer, ch. 4.
 59. One wishing to pray need not be ashamed of a lack of inspiration, but can approach prayer through hakkarah, "cognition" or "discernment," and use his understanding to lead him.
 60. "R. Meir said: Who is greater, the thief or the one who is robbed? You must say, the one who is robbed, for although he has been robbed he keeps silence. Thus is it written, 'They deceived Him with their speech, and lied to Him with their tongues; their hearts were inconstant toward Him, neither were they faithful in His covenant.' As if it were possible, God exclaimed, 'Oh that they had such a heart as this.'" The midrash implies that Israel did not mean in their hearts the promise of obedience they were making with their mouths.
 61. The first explanation is that the people wanted only "simple matters of service" (pashtyyut ha-'avodah), not the "searching and contemplation" described in the last derash and as the second interpretation here. The simplicity they seek is duplicitous because, beyond wanting uncomplicated methods of prayer, the people want not to be burdened with approaching God.

62. The true intention behind the people's words was not as Moses thought, that they desired to serve through cognition (hakkarah) as previously described, but to give the appearance of such a desire only. The people allow themselves to be robbed by not giving their hearts to reaching God; they deceive Moses and are inconstant toward God.
63. The other interpretation in Devarim Rabbah 7:10 depends on a pun: "Oh that they had such a heart," could also be read "Who will give [it] that they have such a heart." The Tannaim say that when God said "Who will give?" Israel should have answered, "O God, you grant that our hearts be so!" In other words, Israel turns to God in order, as Ephraim conceives it, to engage in seeking Him in a way similar to that which he described in the preceding homily.
64. Lekhah Dodi, "Come, My Beloved", a hymn that is a standard part of the liturgy for welcoming the Sabbath, was written by Solomon Alkabets of the kabbalistic circle of sixteenth-century Safed. The reference is to the sixth stanza.
65. This re-reading of 'iti, "with me", as 'oti, "of me," is found in Zohar 2:90b.
66. It is human righteousness -- there being "a zaddik in the land" -- which brings the Shekhinah to "her husband." Good deeds are like the jewels with which she bedecks herself for her "marriage," but evil deeds leave her in a state of shame and separation. Cf. Matt, Zohar, pp. 153-62.

Notes: ZAV

1. As early as Sefer Bahir, and to a marked extent later in the Zohar, biblical descriptions of the priest and his duties are found to allude to the drawing together and unifying of the divine realm which occurs in the "mystery" of hakravah ("sacrifice"/"bringing near"). See Tishby, Mishnat ha-Zohar, 2:194-206. The one who performs yihud, unification, is the priest, as here. Note also that again it is not clear whether "zaddik" refers to the Hasidic leader or to anyone who becomes an adept.
2. "The yod itself is Hokhmah, the first he is Binah, the vav is Tiferet or, because of the numerical value of the letter vav, the totality of the six Sefirot [from Hesed to Yesod], and the final he is Malkhut" (Scholem, Kabbalah, p. 111). Promoting the union of the Blessed Holy One (Tif'eret) and Shekhinah is thus equivalent to making God's name one ("On that day YHVH shall be one and His Name one." (Zechariah 14:9)). I have found the interpretation of li-shemah as le-shem he in the Tikkunei Zohar, Hakdamah, p. 2a.
3. In his discussion of this verse, the author of 'Or ha-Hayyim notes that "the name mizbeah ("altar") is connected to the sufferings [of Israel in exile], that they be an expiation (kapparah). On the altar as making expiation for Israel, see Berakhot 55a. In Zohar Hadash 34b, the altar of expiation is the heart broken in repentance (see Tishby, Mishnat ha-Zohar, 2:211).
4. He represents Shekhinah, and mizbeah is understood to stand for affliction; therefore, 'al ha-mizbeah can be read "concerning the afflictions of the Shekhinah."
5. In portion Va-Yishlah, p. 50, it is explained that "when one realizes that the world was created only for his sake . . . and that the entire existence of the world depends on him (by improving his deeds he sustains the world and, God forbid, the reverse . . .), and that does not need to serve [God] with the motive that others will praise him . . . then he serves God 'alone,' with no confusion of any other thought or motive, thereby bringing about the annihilation of all the 'shells.'" Cf. the formulation of the same idea in the name of Nahman of Horodenka, portion Mattot, p. 218.

6. Regarding oneself as nothing enables one to become aware of and embrace the all-pervasive presence of God's glory. This theme of self-annihilation is especially prominent in the teaching of the Maggid of Mezeritch, and present in a less emphatic form in the Degel. See Schatz-Uffenheimer, Ha-Ḥasidut Ke-Mistikah, pp. 22-31, who notes the connection of such abnegation of self with the classical fear of heaven: "The awe which fills an individual's heart in the face of the awareness of the divine 'fullness' enveloping him, and the humility which clothes him with the consciousness of his nothingness before the only being and reality, are the two moral criteria of Hasidism" (p. 29). Ephraim's interpretation is remarkable not only in its subtle relation of awe and humility, but also in the juxtaposition of the themes of regarding oneself as ashes and regarding oneself as the lone actor on whom the worlds depend. Note that the first theme describes a technique; the latter is a statement of anthropology.
7. Even Rashi's words are found to contain a kabbalistic hint: hesron kis suggests a lack of union between God and man, and between YHVH (Tif'eret) and Adonai (Shekhinah). In gematria, YHVH equals 26 and Adonai, 65; their union is thus 91. The numerical value of kis, however, is only 90, meaning that one is missing and unification needed. Since the number one is represented by the letter alef in Hebrew, it also follows that the one missing is God, the 'aluf of the world. The Maggid of Mezeritch explains that a person without God lacks this 'alef and is only half a person, dalet-mem, but with God he or she becomes 'adam. See Scholem, The Messianic Idea in Judaism, p. 226. Cf. Sotah 5a: "'Adam is an abbreviation: ashes ('afar), blood (dam), bile (marah)."
8. This declaration is recited with the second cup of wine in hand during the recounting of the Exodus story, and is found in the traditional Haggadah of Pesah soon after the paragraphs dealing with the four types of children, to which Ephraim turns below.
9. Again the hi' of the verse is a hint of the letter he, which is itself a hint of study for its own sake and of the Shekhinah. The Sages' interpretation of the word ve-hi' is perhaps in the background here as well: Vav, the first letter, equalling six, suggests the six divisions of the Mishnah; he, five, the five books of the Torah; yod, ten, the ten commandments; and alef, one, the one God (see Marcus Lehmann, Passover Haggadah (London: Honigson, 1969), p. 68).

10. Study of Torah for its own sake means, then, studying in such a way that one puts God into the Torah. Note that study li-shemah is also accorded redemptive significance.
11. Transgression brings the divine vitality, which is the sole source of power to act, into the realm of sin and impurity; in cosmic terms, Shekhinah is thereby separated from the other sefirot and in exile. See Matt, Zohar, pp. 153-62; Tishby, Mishnat ha-Zohar, 1:228-231.
12. It is in awareness of God "without coverings," that is, as the one true reality, that liberation lies.
13. See Bereshit Rabba 12:15: "If I create the world with the attribute of compassion, there will be many sinners; if I do so with the attribute of justice, the world will not endure. Therefore, I shall create it with both." Also see Rosh ha-Shanah 17b. On the Rabbinic contrast of the two attributes, in which rahamim is not the balancing third force of kabbalistic thought, see Urbach, The Sages, pp. 448-61.
14. The sefirah Hesed (love) is identified with Abraham and the divine name 'El, Din (judgment) with Isaac and 'Elohim, and Rahamim (compassion) with Jacob and YHVH. The existence of the world depends on all of these forces and their unity. Elsewhere in the Zohar these three sefirot are described as the "voice" of Binah, the Divine Mother, composed of the basic elements fire (Din), Water (Hesed) and wind (Tif'eret) (see Zohar 1:246b; Tishby, Mishnat ha-Zohar, 1:139, 177-179). This voice is revealed still further in "speech" (Malkhut or Shekhinah), from which all existence proceeds.
15. I have yet to locate a source of this interpretation of Isaiah, which recurs below, p. 179; it may be Ephraim's innovation.
16. Psalm 143:2: "Do not enter into judgment (mishpat) with Your servant, for before You no creature is righteous."
17. This is an inversion of the Talmudic dicta, "The reign of earth is like the reign of heaven" (Berakhot 58a). It is quoted in its original form in the Zohar (1:197a and 3:176b). The phrase is used here to suggest the interwoven pattern and destiny of divine and human worlds. See above, p. 76.

18. "Performing hesed" is a reference to unifying the sefirotic realm, especially to stimulating the union of the Blessed Holy One and Shekhinah. Cf. Zohar 3:222b, 281a (both from Ra'aya Meheimna).
19. The soul which returns in purity to its source at the time of death does not loose its connection with the three divine dimensions, or "names," to which this phrase from Exodus is found to allude (see Zohar 2:97b).
20. 'Anshei zurah, "persons of form," as is spelled out below, are those who introduce the sustaining light of God's hesed into the material world. In parallel conceptions, they are those who change the attribute of judgment into that of compassion (by bringing the power of hesed into din), or those who turn corporeality devoid of God into pure divine light (see above, pp. 80-81). This role does not seem to be limited to zaddikim in Ephraim's thought. On form, matter, and the zaddik's role in the thought of Ya'akov Yosef of Polnoyye, see Dresner, The Zaddik, 124-30, 136-37.
21. Those primarily involved in the material realm are not channels of divine love (hesed) but of limitation and rigor (gevurah), identical with the sefirah of Din, "judgment." These forces of judgment are transformed into evil when not tempered by the power of love. The wicked not only fail to bring hesed into the world like the people of matter, but actually reinforce evil's power through their own evil deeds.
22. In other words, the wicked conduct of the world arouses the forces of judgment above, causing evil below. The rest of the verse and its continuation read: "When the zaddikim are in authority, the people rejoice; but when the wicked rule, the people groan. One who loves wisdom makes his father glad, but one who associates with harlots squanders wealth" (Proverbs 29:2-3).
23. Maimonides' comments on Berakhot 8a have not been located.
24. The world and fulfillment of physical needs cannot cease, if only to assure the continuation of the "work of heaven." A complete devaluation of materiality is not intended here.
25. Harmonious relations between the people of "form" and those of "matter" stimulate a similar joining of the forces of hesed and gevurah in the divine realm. The resulting sefirotic harmony and its counterpart in the

- world is pictured not as stasis, but as a dynamic system of checks and balances, in which the forces of free-flowing love and limitation are both active and together constitute the "middle way" of justice, or compassion.
26. Understanding the partnership that should sustain the world, and trusting that it will sustain him, the "person of form" turns to his proper occupations of Torah and prayer ("service") only to find that the harmonious ideal does not provide for him, but is in fact being undermined.
 27. The people of form are those who engage in the battle for unification of the divine realm, in order to bring to an end the destructive forces of untempered judgment and separation that keep the divine abundance from reaching the Shekhinah and, thus, the world. The people of matter are pictured as those who snatch up the abundance which belongs to all; moreover, their wealth is theirs by mazal, that is, by planetary influences, destiny, or fate, and not by right or by dint of being earned.
 28. Compare Sotah 48b: "Whoever has a piece of bread in his basket and says, 'What shall I eat tomorrow?' can only be one who one of those who are little in faith."
 29. Cf. Isaiah 10:7: "He does not so intend, and his mind does not so think; but it is in his mind to destroy."
 30. Here it becomes clear that his audience sees itself as "people of form" oppressed by the injustice of "people of matter." God knows that they are the ones truly entitled to the physical abundance they now lack; resolution of the situation, however, lies in the time of the final redemption.
 31. Gittin 62a notes: "The rabbis are called kings."
 32. That is, when one disrupts the partnership between people of form and people of matter, replacing mutual oversight and responsibility with unrestrained individualism. This fostering of disunity is tantamount to separating the Blessed Holy One and the Shekhinah, as is explained in what follows.
 33. The reference is to Judges 17:6: "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes."

34. The sefirah of Hesed is identified with light and day, and Din with darkness and night; their combination is therefore the hidden allusion of Genesis 1:5 (see Zohar 1:46a). The Zohar speaks of the desire of both "sides" of the sefirotic tree -- day and night, masculine and feminine -- to be included in the other, which is the "mystery of the middle pillar" (Zohar 1:16b-17a). The union of night and day also refers to the divine marriage of Tif'eret (the Sun), which proceeds from the right, and Shekhinah (the Moon), from the left, the side of Din; see Zohar 1:30b-31a.
35. "The snake is alone unlike all the animals, which travel in pairs" (Tanḥuma, Va-Yehi, 12).
36. The Midrash makes the point that to Adam's punishment for transgressing this original command God added the mercy of giving humanity the Torah, which is also a tree of life. See Seder Eliyahu Rabbah 1:beginning; Targum Yerushalmi, Genesis 3:24; Midrash ha-Gadol, ad loc. That carrying out the Torah gives life is an idea rooted in biblical passages such as Leviticus 18:5, Ezekiel 20:11, etc. Genesis 3:22 relates the tree of life to living forever.
37. A "ṣaddik rules in awe of God" is a hyperliteral reading of 2 Samuel 23:3: moshel ba'adam ṣaddik moshel yir'at 'elohim ("One who rules people justly, one who rules in the fear of God [is like the light of morning at sunrise]"). The idea Ephraim is emphasizing is that fear of God, i.e., keeping his commandments, leads to participation in the divine rule of the world. The similar idea that one who is righteous can rescind a divine decree is stated in Moed Katan 16b. See also Shabbat 63a; Zohar 1:45b.
38. 'Olam she-kullo 'arokh: Kiddushin 39b, referring to the world-to-come.
39. The "truth" is presented in the symbols developed earlier in the sermon: the people of form do not want their own aggrandizement but seek the partnership represented by the attribute of Compassion (Raḥamim) or Justice (Mishpat). It is thus their desire to introduce Hesed, or the forces of love, into lives now under the control of Rigor. "Truth" also lies with "righteousness" both in its sense of right conduct, and its role as that which stimulates the divine union and all its benefits for humankind. Note the extent to which kabbalistic conceptions and social understanding are integrated.

40. The individual not accepting the partnership of matter and form and pursuing solely the former is thus unequivocally condemned: such a one pursues the initial sin of humanity -- separation.
41. The ability to perceive belongs to the heart (Kohelet Rabbah 1:38), and one's heart is king of the entire body (Ibn Ezra, Exodus 8:18); therefore, as the heart of the body politic, the king can perceive what transpires in all of Israel -- as long as he is the king. This same interpretation of the Ba'al Shem appears in slightly expanded form below, p. 201.
42. For Ephraim the sin is not so much that such a person turns himself away from the people of form, but that he keeps the people of form away from the community, leaving it and himself without a heart.
43. Isaiah 57:19: "It shall be well, Well with the far and the near -- said the Lord -- and I will heal them."
44. In other words, creation and the Torah are sources of wisdom from which one can learn how to give glory to God, or in kabbalistic terms, to adorn the bride of the Blessed Holy One and bring about the divine union. On the ritual/ contemplative activities that the kabbalists developed to promote the "holy union," see Scholem, Symbolism, pp. 138-145 (and especially the hymn for Friday evening, pp. 143-144).
45. See the Apocalypse of Abraham 1-7, Bereshit Rabba 38:13. Abraham is one of a number of people who are said to have obtained knowledge of God unaided (see Ba-Midbar Rabbah 14:2, Pesikta Rabbati 33:3). On deriving God's existence from nature, cf. R. Judah's argument re the greatness of zedakah, Baba Batra 10a.
46. The function of the commandments, then, is to increase the reality of God (enlarging the sphere of "I am") and to decrease the power of those things that remove one from "I am." Attachment to God is the primary focus. This comes very close to the more radical idea, stated below, p. 277, that turning aside from God even for a moment is idolatry.
47. This is a reworking of Proverbs 2:17, which describes the wayward woman ('ishshah zarah) "who forsakes the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God." Ephraim applies a reversal of this image to the "virtuous woman," conflating the two parts of the verse

so that the more intimate "companion ('aluf) of her youth" replaces "God" (elsewhere and frequently called 'aluf ha-'olam). The Torah, in other words, is a vehicle for drawing close to God.

48. Rashi points out the necessity of understanding both parable and rhetorical language in conjunction in order to understand the complete sense of a passage. This digression serves to emphasize the unity of revelation even as it is made available in such a "descending chain of utterances."
49. The two halves of the verse from Psalms draw together two "reasons" for the interpretation Ephraim is making. God multiplies the utterances by which people might understand because of His love for all Israel; moreover, He does so in order to properly reward people according to their desire to understand, as is explained in what follows.
50. Destroying the world thus means refusing to know God even in His multiplied revelation. The punishment remains unstated, but logically could be to be overcome by the realm of "other gods."
51. See Pesikta Rabbati 21:19.
52. The "general principle" ('av) is wisdom, Hokhmah, the supernal father ('av). Since the first utterance of creation (and first word of the Torah), be-reshit, is found to be wisdom (see p. 75), therefore the first command is also revealed as wisdom. All the rest of creation and of the Torah spring from this one fountain and draw their life from it.
53. Berakhot 31b and often. Ephraim uses the phrase to emphasize the lengths to which God has gone to make wisdom accessible to all: the descending chain of Torah brings Hokhmah to the ordinary human level.
54. That is, "refute him," or "give him a caustic retort." The Haggadah continues: "Say to him: 'It is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt.' For me, not for him, for had he been there he would not have been redeemed" because he excludes himself from his people and denies God.
55. Abraham imitates the divine activity of Creation by "engraving" and "combining" the twenty-two letters of the alphabet, his mastery of these principles demonstrated by his own creative acts. Sefer Yeẓirah adds

that God "was revealed to him . . . and He kissed him on his head, and . . . made a covenant with him . . . He connected the twenty-two letters of the Torah to his tongue, and revealed His secret to him . . ." Ephraim uses the passage to confirm that Abraham has understood how the Torah gives life.

56. The identification of mnazzah and strife seems to be rooted in several biblical verses, e.g., Isaiah 58:4, "You fast in strife and contention (u-mazzah)"; Proverbs 13:10, 17:19. The proof-text given in the Zohar itself is the Targum's translation of Meribah ("Contention") as Mazzuta in Exodus 17:7. To the Zohar's author, mazzah suggests the struggle one makes against the forces of the evil "side"; Ephraim uses the imagery of the shells to denote these powers. (This passage is identified as being from the Ra'aya Meheimna, but is found incorporated in the body of the Zohar.) On the idea of the "shells" see the Introduction, p. .
57. Atbash is a system of letter replacement in which the first letter of the alphabet is represented by the last, the second letter by the next-to-the-last, etc. Using this system, yod is represented by mem and he by zadi. See Scholem, Kabbalah, p. 338. The Ra'aya Meheimna (Zohar 3:251a-b) explains that mazzah thus includes the YH and final H of the divine name; playing on Exodus 12:17, "You shall keep the [Feast of] Unleavened Bread (mazzot)," it then asserts that the mazzah is actually kept for the Blessed Holy One, the vav of the Name. When He is added -- that is, when the divine union of Tif'eret and the rest of the sefirot is brought about-- then from mazzah, mizvah is made, and the divine name is made complete.
58. To the Zohar's interpretation Ephraim adds a clarification from the Lurianic Kabbalah. In that system the process of redemption, dependent as it is on human action, nevertheless involves a number of stages of progressively more complete restoration. The Lurianic parzuf of Ze'ir Anpin, made up of the six sefirot gathered around Tif'eret (or the Blessed Holy One) is restored as the three aspects of divine intelligence, Hokhmah, Binah, and Da'at become complete and are revealed. See portion Bereshit, note 74. Redemption thus involves both divine union and complete revelation. Therefore, the hidden letters in mazzah will no longer be hidden, and that portion of divinity so represented will also be united with Ze'ir Anpin, represented by vav: because of the divine union, mazzah will then include a vav and become mizvah, and mizvah will no

longer involve any concealment and will stand revealed as YHVH.

59. The Talmud's discussion of carrying on the Sabbath (Shabbat 2a-b) identifies, both in the case of one indoors and one outdoors, two prohibited kinds of work which are found to occur in four specific instances. This discussion receives a kabbalistic interpretation: separation will give way to the completion of the four letter name, which is equivalent to the full revelation of divinity and of the three divine intelligences.
60. See, for example, the passage in Zohar 2:61b-62a, translated by Matt, Zohar, pp. 113-16: "When Israel entered and joined themselves to the Holy King . . . they were pure enough to eat another kind of bread, higher than at first. At first . . . they went into the bread called Mazzah. Now they were purer; they went in to eat higher bread . . . from Heaven" (p. 114).
61. Wisdom (Hokhmah), Understanding (Binah), and Da'at. Again, unification of the Vav with YH-H is equated with progressing to the point at which these three aspects of divine mind are revealed.
62. The full outpouring of the power of Hokhmah, Binah, and Da'at, coinciding with complete redemption, not only does away with all evil but reveals the sole reality of YHVH formerly concealed in the guise of the commandments. On developments within the Kabbalah related to the future of the Torah in Messianic times, see Scholem, Symbolism, pp. 66-86. In what follows, note that Ephraim does not propose nullification of any commandments, or a change in their validity, but rather a change in how humankind will approach their performance.
63. Resh stands for reshit, or Hokhmah, bet for Binah, and yod for Da'at, without which there can be no yihud: "Poverty brings about strife and contention, God forbid, and such is the case in spiritual matters; there is no poverty other than poverty of da'at. Therefore, the Shekhinah is called "strife," riv . . . because she is poor in exile. But when one serves God in truth, uniting the Blessed Holy One and His Shekhinah . . . then he turns riv into rabbi. This has been explained in the name of my master, my grandfather . . . as the mystery of Hokhmah and Binah with the[ir] flow. This certainly is the sense of [the saying]: There is no yihud without Da'at: Da'at is the true unifier in which Hokhmah and Binah are included; "by da'at the rooms are filled" [Proverbs 24:4]. Thus He is drawn to the

Shekhinah, as if it were possible . . . and from this yihud comes about in all worlds and the strife is settled. All the worlds are filled with the aspect [called] Rabbi, which is the aspect of the divine intelligences flowing forth." (Degel Maḥane Ephraim, p. 117).

64. Both the explanation of mazzah and the concomitant idea that the hidden reality of YHVH in the mizvot will be revealed, and the interpretation of Rabbi with the accompanying notion that the truth of the commandments will be understood, make the same point: the essence of the commandments and therefore of the religious life lies in divine unification and the attainment of da'at (awareness, or intimate knowledge of God).
65. Kohelet 2:14.
66. In other words, one who is enlightened must realize that just as the three divine intelligences move from a less to a more revealed state (see note 58 above), people also develop and are to be found at greater and lesser stages of understanding. Presumably the laws are primarily for their sake. Ephraim's point, however, is that the wise need to channel their impatience into the task of "sweetening" the entire community so that divine compassion will prevail (see pp. 142-44).
67. The afikoman (a portion of mazzah) is the traditional substitute for the Paschal Lamb, which was originally the final food of the Seder feast. The comment in Mishnah Pesahim should be understood as a reminder not to allow the Passover to degenerate into an ordinary social gathering, although the traditional interpretation is that the meal should not be finished with dessert.
68. 'Elohim equals 86. $86 \times 3 = 258$, the value of Haran. Abraham's departure from Haran is a model of the mystic's leaving the wisdom of astrology and science for more profound understanding of God (see Zohar 1:78a-b). Haran symbolizes a low level of spiritual attainment, and 'Elohim represents only one aspect of the divine (see above, pp. 108-11). Revelation in its fullness (gadlut as opposed to katnut, "smallness") involves the unity of God as YHVH and the free flow of His light into the world and the mind of the seeker.
69. That is, they are necessary both in order to bring full understanding to the "smallest" among the people (see pp. 153-58 above), and to bring revelation to its

fullest possible extent. The more Torah is spelled out and innovatively interpreted, the closer it comes to full life; see pp. 94-95.

70. The counting of the Omer, from the second night of Pesah until Shavuot, 50 days later, is a biblical commandment to prepare an offering of grain to be brought to the Temple (see Leviticus 23:15-21). Lurianic Kabbalah accorded this ritual act cosmic significance: the counting marks the time that is required to bring the restoration of the world to completion. See Peri 'Ez Hayyim, Sha'ar 22, sefirat ha-'omer, ¶1.
71. Quoting Psalm 38:5 with a change of the pronoun from first to third person.
72. Like the snake who travels alone, the evil person separates himself from the community of believers in denying (or questioning) the reality of God behind the commandments. See pp. 150-51 above.
73. This interpretation is not found in 'Or ha-Hayyim but is given by Rashi, following Mekilta, Bo', 11 on Exodus 12:23. The following illustration is either Ephraim's own or from another source.
74. The parable exemplifies faith: those who believe are the children who grab on to God and his "clothing," that is, the Torah and commandments. The unbeliever lives in fear of God; his attempt to undermine the faith of others can result only in his own spiritual death, and exclusion from the community.
75. This classic picture of the zaddik passing through Gehenna has its roots in similar motifs regarding the descent of the zaddik's soul in the Zohar and the Lurianic literature, for example, Zohar 3:220b: "Even perfect zaddikim descend [to Sheol]. Why do they descend? In order to take a number of evil ones from there and raise them up above . . . those who thought about teshuvah in this world but were not able [to return]" (see Tishby, Mishnat ha-Zohar, 2:678). Tishby draws attention to the fact that the later Zoharic literature emphasizes a personal connection between the evil one who can be saved from Gehenna and the zaddik in this world: the soul of the zaddik "abandons those evil ones who held themselves distant from the [zaddik as] preacher . . . but rescues even totally wicked ones if they had approached the zaddik" (ibid., pp. 678-679). All of this is discussed, and the place of such motifs in Hasidic teaching about the descent of the zaddik is

- put into the perspective of its literary antecedents, by Piekarz, Bi-Ymei Zemiḥat ha-Hasidut, pp. 280-302. Note that Ephraim quotes this teaching to throw light not on the role of the zaddik, but on the necessity of belief. In the Degel, descent refers primarily to the zaddik's interruption of solitary and lofty devekut in order to teach the people (see pp. 194-95, and the Introduction, pp. 29-33).
76. Redemption is equivalent to the raising of all the divine sparks, leaving the realm of evil shells without life. Note that Ephraim's use of Exodus 15:16 furthers the imagery that he has already applied to the believer.
 77. The type of the wicked child is like that of the wicked giver, in that he wishes neither to believe in God, nor that others believe. (Compare this with the teaching on pp. 113-14, in which one can learn even from one who wishes "neither to give, nor that others give.")
 78. It is the one who is wise that shatters heresy here, whereas the verse speaks of God.
 79. Ephraim collects together some of the major passages he has interpreted; his closing emphasis is on the multiple ways that God is made known so that all can understand. The connection of all to God is basic to the world's sustenance; the righteous are rewarded for exposing the heretics who would undermine Israel's faith and introduce separation in the communal and divine realms.
 80. Shabbat ha-Gadol is the Sabbath preceding Passover; the "abbreviated reckoning" is a method of dating that omits the millennium, 5,000.

Based on connections in thought and rhetoric, and on internal references, I believe that all that has preceded is part of one long sermon, close to the form it had when preached by Ephraim. It is a somewhat intricate but forceful appeal for harmony, for awareness of the multiple levels at which God makes Himself available, and for response via belief and devekut.

81. See Zohar 3:79b. Prayer for the sake of zo't is prayer for the Shekhinah and for her union with the rest of the sefirotic body. A version of this teaching found in Keter Shem Tov, an early (1784) and anonymous collection of the teachings of the Ba'al Shem as contained in the works of Ya'akov Yosef, is explained by Jacobs, Hasidic Prayer, pp. 26-28.

82. The biblical "fire on ('al) the altar" is altered to "fire of (shel) the altar" in the earliest editions, the change leading more naturally into Ephraim's interpretive comment.
83. That is, he brings Keneset Yisrael, the Shekhinah, together with the Blessed Holy One, bringing about the union which allows divine hesed to flow. See pp. 107-9 above. On the priestly raiment see Zohar 2:238b (Tishby, Mishnat ha-Zohar, 2:232).
84. See Matt, Zohar, pp. 43-45, in which passage the Torah is clothed in order not to destroy the world; what is under the garments is the essence. For Ephraim, interpretation, which is the process of stripping off these coverings, nevertheless involves adding to the essence. See pp. 216-17.
85. This same idea is expressed by Ya'akov Yosef of Polnoy-ye: "One is obliged to believe that 'the whole earth is full of His glory' [Isaiah 6:3]; there is no place empty of Him [Zohar Hadash, Yitro, 55b (Tikkunei Zohar)]. Every thought of a person has in it His reality, may He be blessed. Each thought is a complete entity . . . When an evil and strange thought comes, it is so that [the one at prayer] will restore it and raise it up . . . and if one pushes aside that thought, then it is as if he pushes aside and destroys an entire world" (Ben Porat Yosef 39a). This is obviously related to the teaching also attributed to the Ba'al Shem, that every word or letter contains "worlds and souls and divinity"; see Yitro, note 55.
86. I have not located a source for this identification of 'olah and thought. On sacrifice as the symbolic representation of contemplation see Matt, Zohar, pp. 145-47 and notes.
87. In the divine sanctuary above, Binah, the high priest is the sefirah of Hesed. See Tishby, Mishnat ha-Zohar, 2:187, 203. A more specific identification of the priest and the Blessed Holy One has not been located.
88. According to R. Meir, God makes Adam and Even not "garments of skins" (Genesis 3:21), but garments of light; see Bereshit Rabba 20:12; cf. Sotah 14a. For Ephraim, this light is the Torah.
89. God's hiddenness is the norm in this paradoxical teaching; awareness of His hidden presence leads to turning toward Him. True concealment is not this normal

hiddenness but the hiding of God's hidden presence from human awareness. One from whom God is so doubly concealed is not conscious that God is hidden in everything, and is therefore not brought to humility and awe before the One "whose glory fills the world."

90. "Putting on" malkhut, or wearing the "robes" of malkhut, means becoming aware of God's presence (malkhut = Shekhinah, the Divine Presence). Esther, through love, comes to know the truth, which is that God's presence is concealed all around her; thus she becomes clothed in such divine awareness. The same meaning is found in Mordecai's royal robes (levash malkhut). See Zohar 3:169b. Also note the pun in relating 'Ester (Esther) to 'astir ("I will hide"): Esther conceals her true identity as God conceals his hiddenness.
91. See Hullin 60b; cf. Azriel, Perush ha-Aggadot, ed. Isaiah Tishby, p. 37.
92. See Exodus 16:4, 13. The Rabbis note, in Megillah 13a, that Moses was called Yered because manna came down (yarad) for Israel in his lifetime; the Gaon R. Elijah of Vilna, the great opponent of Hasidism, adds that Moses "brought (horid) the Torah to Israel."
93. The very conservative note of this interpretation should not go unnoticed. It contains a clear warning against teachers who are not "clean and upright," and distinguishes degrees of danger in that which is not "respectable," reflecting either an awareness of the continuing possibility of heretical outbursts like that of the Frankists, or, more likely, a keen ideological struggle within the community. Note also that even the "clean" Torah must be approached only after preparation, "purification": Torah is powerful.

BALAK - Notes

1. If one cannot do a small thing, a greater thing is obviously excluded.
2. See above, Zav, note 37.
3. The first he of YHVH is identified with Binah, the supernal mother or "palace" from which all the other sefirot are emanated. Din, the sefirah of judgment, proceeds from and is rooted in Binah, which is also called Teshuvah, "Return." It is the world of "Intelligence" (binah), or Thought, in which opposites are differentiated yet held in unity, and to which forces of evil must be raised in order to be sweetened.
4. The final he of the divine name is identified with Malkhut, the Shekhinah. As Binah is Thought, and the sefirot Hesed, Din, and Tif'eret the voice, so Malkhut is speech. She is "small" because, unlike Binah, she has no power of her own; she is Binah's daughter. She stands at the junction of the divine realm and the lower worlds and is the channel or "mouth" through which divine presence and providence (including divine judgment) are made manifest.
5. Contemplation is the technique that brings about that "raising" to Binah by which opposites are reconciled and forces of evil "sweetened" at their root. See pp. 255-56 below.
6. From "small" Malkhut, the gate into the divine realm, the zaddik ascends by means of contemplative devekut, or "attachment," to the "great" realm of Binah where judgment is reunited with its opposite, Hesed.
7. In other words, Balaam's words point to the fact that it is only in the "light of Torah" -- through the teaching of Kabbalah and connection with the Shekhinah, the divine "mouth" -- that one can grasp how to achieve this goal. The quotation is from Daniel 9:25.
8. Balaam, the evil emissary of the nations, has no power to alter states of spiritual attainment, especially not that of Israel. Note that all of Israel are described here,

in relationship to Balaam and the outside world, as being in gadlut, whereas Ephraim frequently deals elsewhere with the problem of the inability to sustain such a state (see pp. 115-17, 288-93).

It is also interesting to note Ephraim's disregard for the Biblical story line: Balak's action of verse 15 is explained as a consequence of a misunderstanding of Balaam's statement in verse 18! This disregard of narrative time line is consistent with the midrashic approach to interpretation, serving here to underline Balak's -- and the nations' -- basic misunderstanding of the extent of their power over Israel.

9. The words of Balaam in the mouth of the Torah have a totally different sense, based on the similarity between la-'avor, "beyond," and le-ha'avir, "to transmit": Rather than an expression of limitation, the verse is interpreted to express the impossibility of limiting the Torah to words devoid of inner kavvanah, the "heart."
10. The occasion for this interpretation is the dissimilarity in wording between the first and second of Balaam's attempts to secure God's word regarding Israel in a form acceptable to Balak (i.e., a curse). In both locations "speak thus" appears but the phrase "while I seek a meeting yonder" is absent in the first version. What does this signify? The same question is addressed in Zohar 3:210b, on which much of Ephraim's interpretation depends.
11. Even the realm of the "shells," described in the introduction, will be forced to bless Israel, like the evil angel of the following midrash.
12. According to a midrash in Shabbat 119b, "Two ministering angels, one good and one evil, accompany one from the Synagogue to his home on the eve of the Sabbath. If one enters and finds the candle lighted and the table set and his bed spread out, the good angel says, 'May it be God's will that another Sabbath be like this! And the evil angel is compelled to answer, 'Amen.'" In other words, the forces of evil have no choice but to affirm Israel's blessing in light of righteous behavior such as observing the Sabbath, or (as in Ephraim's next comments) performing acts of mystical unification.
13. The author of the Ra'aya Meheimna notes (Zohar 3:263b) that the recitation of the Shema twice daily unites the two aspects of day and night, i.e., Tif'eret and

Shekhinah, thus bringing about the divine union (yihud). See Berakhot 11b. The verse "Hear, O Israel, YHVH is our God, YHVH is one" (Deuteronomy 6:4) has 25 letters; its recitation invokes the completion of the Torah and the complete yihud of the erected tabernacle (see Zohar 3:264b (Ra'aya Meheimna)).

14. Kiddush ha-Shem, the sanctification of the name, basically refers to actions that cause others to become aware of God; the term came especially to signify the public refusal to convert from Judaism or transgress a commandment rather than be killed. For the Rabbinic roots of this idea see Urbach, The Sages, pp. 352-60. The long history of the many Jews who chose to affirm their faith and be martyred rather than convert to Christianity lies behind this phrase, and would have been fresh in the minds of Ephraim and his audience from recent pogroms (see the Introduction, pp. 19-21). However, Ephraim also seems to be referring to a wider sense of dedication, perhaps echoing the language of the Ra'aya Meheimna on the same page to which he has just referred (Zohar 3:263b), which describes Abraham's risking of his body and soul in pursuit of yihud.
15. The passage in Berakhot relates this verse from Chronicles to the Shema': as Israel proclaims God's singularity in the latter, God singles out Israel from among the nations in the former. Indicative of the relationship between God and His people, the verse is written in His tefillin, the leather boxes containing scriptural passages bound on the arm and forehead during prayer.
16. The passage from the Zohar is similar to that of Berakhot only in its use of the image of one singularity corresponding to, and in relationship with, another. For the Zohar the focus is on the Blessed Holy One being received by Malkhut, the Community of Israel, in a corresponding state of unification, resulting in the union of God's name. See Zohar 3:93b. The verse from Zechariah is also the last line of the 'Aleinu prayer, and was a particular focus, along with the Shema', for kavvanot of unification. On kavvanot and on the attitude toward them in Hasidic circles, see Scholem, Major Trends, pp. 275-78; Jacobs, Hasidic Prayer, pp. 36-39, 70-75, 80-81; Joseph Weiss, "The Kavvanot of Prayer in Early Hasidism," Journal of Jewish Studies, 9(1958); 163-92.
17. For Ephraim, these sources point to an identity of the people Israel as one, with God as one. He bolsters this perception of the intimate inter-relationship of Israel

and God with an often repeated interpretation of Genesis 2:19, understanding a similar identity to exist between one's soul and one's own name (see p. 89 above).

18. The true depth of Israel's connection with God, which is rooted in the Shema¹, the basic affirmation of identity as a Jew, is not understood by Balaam. Israel is not merely acting from adherence to a single spiritual attribute, but from actual oneness with God.

The rather fanciful derash suggested by Rashi's commentary -- that Balaam undertakes an action to separate Israel from its rung as God's treasured people and therefore from its blessing -- resolves the textual "problem" with which Ephraim began, and asserts that such historically oft-attempted separation cannot be effective.

19. Rashi, and following him, Ephraim, builds his interpretation on the ambiguity of the Hebrew word davar, "word" or "thing." Rashi detects something lacking in the text, and rhetorically asks what sort of "putting" is meant. His answer is that when Balaam heard that he would not be able to curse Israel he did not want to go back to Balak. Therefore God put a bridle and bit in his mouth so that he could be led "like a beast," and told him, "Against your will you will return to Balak." See Sanhedrin 105b, Be-Midbar Rabbah 20:18.
20. The Shekhinah will speak using Balaam's voice. See Zohar 3:210b.
21. See Zohar 3:93 b: The Blessed Holy One and Keneset Yisrael are one: See Be-Reshit, note 1, and the further elucidation of this idea in the following homilies.
22. The intimate connection between God and Israel is emphasized by the imagery of God's physical yearning (drawn from Jeremiah 31:20), and by a rereading of Numbers 23:21 to yield the idea that the Shekhinah is actually within Israel. Note that the Targum's use of the word Shekhinah to avoid the suggestion that God might be physically present, raising a shout or trumpet blast of joy, is subverted and found to demonstrate precisely His concrete presence (see p. 121 above).
23. Cf. Midrash Tanhuma, Mishpatim, 5: "The Blessed Holy One said, 'Everything I do, I do with din, for if I had wanted to cross the line of justice [i.e., be too severe], the world could not have endured.'... 'There is no anger in Me.'" This is far removed from Ephraim's

- interpretation, which uses the verse to speak of unchecked din ('judgment' rather than "justice"). On Israel being accused of not being distinguishable from the other nations see Yalkut Shimoni 2:507.
24. In other words, if even the leaders keep themselves apart from the nations and untainted by their "practices," the accusation that Israel has become equally evil will be unfounded, because the people is a single entity. Interestingly, the Pietrokov edition of 1912 changes "nations" (goyim) to "idolators" (gillulim).
 25. Va-Yikra Rabba 23:7, interpreting "Behold (hen), you are nothing (me-'ayin), and your work is a thing of naught" (Isaiah 41:24): "Hen is a Greek word [en = one]...The Blessed Holy One said: You are one nation unto me from among the nations of the world; me-'ayin, from among those of whom it is written 'all the nations are as nothing ('ayin) before him' [Isaiah 40:17]."
 26. Derekh halazah. This indicates a homiletical style that embraces humor and story-telling, or striking rhetoric as devices to reach one's audience. For a valuable discussion of this dimension of the period's Jewish homiletics, see Piekarz, Bi-Ymei Zemiḥat ha-Ḥasidut, pp. 124-41.
 27. The Ba'al Shem's humorous anecdote ironically points up the fact that the isolation of the Jews was both self-chosen and imposed by the surrounding Christian world. Ephraim uses the incident to illustrate the unimportance of Jews in Christian eyes; the original anecdote is far more revealing of the psychological dynamics between the communities.
 28. See Zohar 3:93b, 73a-b; also Pesahim 118a ("It is fitting for one to save one"); Pesikta Rabbah 11:7 ("It is fitting for the great to cleave to the small").
 29. See Bereshit Rabba 1:4, and pp. 110-11 above; also note Berakhot 6b, asserting that the world was created only for the ideal human being.
 30. The "seven peoples" refers to the "seven nations greater and mightier than yourselves" whom Israel is to dispossess when God gives them the Land (Deuteronomy 7:1). In the Zohar the nations are the people of the "other side," whereas Israel is the people of God (Zohar 2:17a); the principle which gives power to the seventy nations (i.e., all other nations) is Samael, Satan (Zohar 1:205a; Tikkunei Zohar, tikkun 24, p. 69a).

31. See Va-Yikra Rabbah 36:2: "In the time to come, Israel will rule over all the world."
32. The seven lower sefirot are called the seven "days" of "construction" or emanative creation. The sefirot of holiness are paralleled by the sefirot of the "left" or the "other side," which are powers of impurity fed from the sefirah of Din (judgment) and by human sin. See Scholem, Kabbalah, pp. 108, 123-25. The demonic powers plague human beings through a variety of temptations, including strange thoughts (see Matt, Zohar, pp. 85-90).
33. In the Zohar the powers of the other side are also conceived as "shells," or as aspects of the "bark" of the tree of emanation (see Scholem, Kabbalah, pp. 124-25); the nations are also so identified (Zohar 2:108b; Tikkunei Zohar 24:69a). Ephraim's point is that attachment to God brings the nations, which oppress Israel, under Israel's power. The situation is then the reverse of that depicted in Psalm 106:42, the language of which is echoed here: "Their enemies oppressed them and they were subject to their power." Devekut brings about redemption in the physical sphere. That this messianic dimension, secondary as it is, is not totally subsumed in the quest for personal salvation throws light on the question of the "neutralization" of Messianism in early Hasidism (see Scholem, The Messianic Idea in Judaism, pp. 194-96, 217).
34. Zohar 1:181a. Shekhinah is therefore poor, dal. Since there is also nothing to grasp in regard to 'Ein Sof, the other dalet is connected with it.
35. Note the complete identification of the Blessed Holy One and 'Ein Sof (see Scholem, Kabbalah, p. 90). The identification serves not only to blur the technicalities of earlier Kabbalah, but also to emphasize the complete bridging of any separation in the Godhead brought about by uniting the two "dalets."
36. The performance of such unification in all Israel's activity brings together heaven (the Blessed Holy One) and earth (the Shekhinah), just as God's presence dwelt in the desert mishkan, or sanctuary (see Exodus 25:8). Through their mystical activity, the community itself becomes the mishkan. See Tishby, Mishnat ha-Zohar, 2:183-194; Matt, Zohar, pp. 127-31.
37. Bereshit Rabba 77:1: "The Blessed Holy One anticipated by means of the righteous in this world everything he

- will do in the world that is coming. Thus God will resurrect the dead, and Elijah resurrected the dead, etc. ...As it is written regarding God, 'the Lord alone shall be exalted' so also of Jacob: 'Jacob was left alone.'" Ephraim's prior interpretation is in the Degel, Va-Yishlah, p. 50.
38. The passage concludes: "...to me the Torah was given, and putting all of it into effect depends upon me."
 39. The responsibility is not just that of fulfilling the Torah -- the original intent of the words in Sanhedrin -- but of establishing cosmic reality. "Foundation," yesod, is the name of the ninth sefirah, which is stimulated by righteous action, bringing about the divine union (Zohar 3:110b).
 40. In other words, one who understands the centrality of his spiritual task is freed from social compulsions, improper motivation, and distraction from God.
 41. The midrash speaks of the zaddikim sharing in God's redemptive power in this world, an idea suggested by the use of the word "alone" in regard to both Jacob and God. Ephraim returns to his previous interpretation of "alone" as a reference to singular attachment to the only God, and asserts that devekut itself brings about redemption.
 42. This is another possible English translation of the Hebrew; see the Jewish Publication Society's 1917 English version.
 43. Images of national and mystical redemption give way to the significance of uninterrupted devekut as Ephraim brings his homily to a close.
 44. According to Bereshit Rabba 44:12, God brings Abraham "outside" (Genesis 15:5), namely, above the vault of heaven so that his looking at the stars is from above rather than below, teaching that Abraham is no longer subject to astrology. Cf. Rashi on that verse.
 45. The social hierarchy is inversely related to the hierarchy of transgression: the lower rank of the people, called "Jacob," are overwhelmed by actual sins; the more spiritual "people of form", called "Israel," occasionally fall into less serious thoughts of sin. God, Ephraim claims, overlooks both and is with His people.

46. "He does not trouble them" is Rashi's interpretation of the phrase, which he bases on a discussion of the Masoretic reading in Sotah 31a. The Masoretes note that although lo' in a Biblical text. The Midrash uses this verse from Isaiah primarily to affirm God's presence with Israel even in suffering; see Mekilta, Bo', Pesah, 14; Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer, 40.

47. Rashi's explanation reads, "In all my actions I place his fear before my eyes." Ephraim's interpretation subtly replaces Rashi's suggestion of awareness of God as a suitable part of one's behavior with the Ba'al Shem's ideal of continuous attachment to God. The Besht's hyperliteral rereading of Psalm 32:2 undergirds this shift: as long as YHVH remains in the verse, adam is "one whom YHVH does not consider guilty; however, when YHVH is removed the last phrase of the verse reads "for him it is considered a sin"; to remove YHVH changes everything. Scholem notes, "To be aware of this real . . . immanence of God is already the realization of a state of devekut. In the opinion of the Ba'al Shem, to be out of devekut . . . implies the negation of His oneness and all-pervading presence . . . ' Once a man turns aside from devekut and the fixation of his thought on God, he is considered as one who serves other gods" (Scholem, The Messianic Idea in Judaism, p. 209). See pp. 276-77 and the Introduction, pp. 55-56.

48. The Shulhan 'Arukh is the authoritative code of rabbinic law written in Safed by Joseph Karo (1488-1575) and popularized in Eastern Europe through the work of Moses Isserles. Karo was not only a halakhic authority, but also a kabbalist associated with the circle of Alkabetz and Cordovero (see R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, Joseph Karo: Lawyer and Mystic (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1980). The idea expressed by Karo, that realizing God's actual presence before him fills one with awe, is common in the literature of kabbalistic ethics that began in Safed; see, for example, Elijah de Vidas, Reshit Hokhmah, Chapter 2 of the "Gate of Fear," in Safed Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), ed. Lawrence Fine, p. 126. In Ephraim's thought, the presence of God in all things is axiomatic.

49. This exegesis of Genesis 24:62 is presented in a somewhat cramped fashion, but the point that awe comes from awareness of God's presence is clear. In an earlier homily (Degel Ma'ane Ephraim, p. 33), it is explained that the attribute of yir'ah, identified with the sefirah of Din and thus with Isaac, comes to one from the "well" of contemplation, in which one realizes

that he is standing before the Life of the Universe, who watches his every movement and occupation. The previous interpretation is summarized and then reinforced by the linguistic identity between seeing and awe (re'iyah and yir'ah). The addition of shame before God (and not before humanity) represents a return to the teaching found in the Shulhan 'Arukh.

50. In Hagigah, the point of this reference to the dimensions of the heavenly spheres, the celestial "chariot," and holy "hayyot" (Ezekiel 1), is that no one can possibly put himself above God. For Ephraim the passage serves to illustrate "the grandeur of the Creator" as one goes up in contemplation, echoing the visionary ascent to the Merkavah (see Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, pp. 40-79; Blumenthal, Understanding Jewish Mysticism, pp. 47-97).
51. See above, p. .
52. A restatement of the Ba'al Shem's idea that deflection of the thought from God even for an instant is equivalent to idolatry. See above, p. 187. "Awe" of this sort, then, is the same as devekut.
53. See p. 178 above.
54. The biblical text employs the third-person singular pronoun, referring to Jacob/Israel as a single entity; I adopt the literal rendering here, in contrast to that employed in the previous pages, to suggest how Ephraim seems to be reading the verse.
55. On the unity of God, Torah, and Israel see Be-Reshit, note 1. The "divine portion" in the human being is the soul, neshamah. See Scholem, Kabbalah, 155-157; Jacobs, "The Doctrine of the 'Divine Spark' in Man in Jewish Sources," Studies in Rationalism, Judaism, and Universalism, pp. 87-114; Tishby, Mishnat ha-Zohar, 2:3-42; cf. Job 31:2. Note that the important point in our author's eyes is the impossibility of separation from God.
56. The Torah was given in seventy languages (Shabbat 88b; Rosh ha-Shanah 27a); its every word has seventy aspects (Be-Midbar Rabbah 13:15). On Kabbalah's treatment of this theme see Scholem, Symbolism, pp. 62-65.
57. Cf. Eruvin 41a: "The body follows the head."

58. Hokhmah, the sefirah of wisdom, stands at the head of the "right side," the side of holiness, and is called "Holiness"; see Zohar 2:121a; below, Selections, note 75.
59. Contrary to his orders, the Emperor Antoninus finds R. Hanina b. Hama with Rabbi Judah the Prince when he arrives for one of his clandestine visits. R. Hanina, sent outside, discovers a slain slave and brings him back to life through the power of his prayer. Such power is not attributed by the Talmud to R. Hanina's association with Rabbi; the organic leadership image is read into the text. As R. Judah the Prince was the most illustrious Rabbi of his time (hence his designation in the text simply as "Rabbi"), so, it is implied, was the Ba'al Shem the head of his generation.
60. In other words, awe is required for the wisdom that is now present to continue in force. The argument being developed is the necessity of attachment to the generation's spiritual leader: "now," that is, at a time when there is a leader who "does everything in pure wisdom," the "awe" required is that of "clinging" to him.
61. Cf. Job 22:28.
62. What is described is a state in which all of the people have attained the level of zaddikim through attachment to a "leader and guide" like Moses. Ephraim does not make clear whether this is a future or a present state of affairs; presumably it would have been the case in the time of the Ba'al Shem.
63. This is a basic exegetical principle drawn from the Zohar: "There is no word in the Torah that does not contain many secrets, many reasons, many roots, many branches" (Zohar 2:55b). See Matt, Zohar, pp. 43-45.
64. The Lurianic image of zimzum -- Ein Sof contracting itself to make room for creation -- is here divested of cosmology and presented as a principle of benign diminishment in both divine and human conduct. Cf. p. 157.
65. Rereading "fallen down" (nofel) as an isolated present participle.
66. Uncontracted, the zaddik's thought is connected not merely to Binah, the "world of thought," or to Hokhmah, primal wisdom, but expands into the Infinite. The boundary between zaddik and God dissolves. Cf. pp.

67. The Zohar identifies Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, representing the sefirot of Hesed, Din, and Tiferet, respectively, as the "chariot" of the Blessed Holy One (Zohar 1:223b, 3:99a, 257b). See Bereshit Rabba 47:6; Scholem, Kabbalah, p. 111. When these forces are joined, Kenaset Yisrael, the Shekhinah, is united with them (Zohar 1:150a). This marriage is equivalent to the Shekhinah's descent into the mishkan, or "tabernacle," at the time of its dedication (see Zohar 2:179b, which is drawing on earlier midrashim: refer to Tishby, Mishnat ha-Zohar 2:190).
68. Edels' comment actually reads as follows: "If one were worthy of the diverted attention of the Messiah, the Messiah will come to him when his attention is diverted by finding something, for joy and goodness will be his; If one is not worthy, the coming of the Messiah will be for him like the inadvertence [or, removal of attention] of the scorpion's sting, for his harm." Ephraim misquotes the passage. Edels' point is that for one who is righteous, the Messiah's coming will be a joyful surprise, like finding something, whereas for one who is not, it will come with the shock of judgment. The Degel's author uses the commentary to build a sense of contrast between redemption in judgment and in love. (The passage is used by other Hasidic teachers to argue for diverting awareness from exterior reality as a spiritual technique, an idea not broached here; see Schatz-Uffenheimer, Ha-Hasidut ke-Mistikah, pp. 35-36.)
69. The Ra'aya Meheimna's identification of Nisan with Hesed and Tishri with Din is strengthened by an appeal to the alphabet: the nun-samekh of Nisan follow one another like alef and bet in aviv; Tishri's letters are in reverse alphabetical order. Proper order is rooted in Hesed.
70. The masculine is of the right side, that of Hesed, and the feminine of the left, the side of Din (see Zohar 3:14a, 43b). The two are to be joined as one. Regarding other masculine-feminine imagery in the Zohar see Matt, Zohar, pp. 55-56, 75-79, and corresponding notes.
71. See Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah 8 end: "If you prove not worthy [redemption] will be 'at its time'; if you prove worthy, 'I will speed it.'" Also see Sanhedrin 98a. In Zohar 1:116b-117a, "time" is identified as the Shekhinah; her union with the Blessed Holy One is "speeded" by those who exert themselves in the Torah.

Notes: Balak

72. Dalyav, "boughs," refers to the apparent weakness of Israel, who will in any case arouse redemption through their righteousness and by turning to God. This arousal from below brings about an outpouring of divine love, or hesed, which is symbolized as water (see Yitro, note 5).
73. In Lurianic kabbalah, elevating the sparks to their source is an animating force referred to as "female waters," which "arouse" the "male waters" from above. Their union and what it produces are essential to the process of tikkun. See Scholem, Kabbalah, pp. 141-43.
74. Pinhas sees the mem of mavet, death, and joins it with the divine powers represented by the other letters of the word romah, "spear," as is explained in what follows.
75. See Tanhuma, Pekudei, 3; above, p. 76.
76. "Fallen" thoughts of hesed are elsewhere explained as those thoughts of carnal love that come to one because they contain a spark of divine love which needs to be reunited with its root. See p. 264. Pinhas becomes aware of the harlotry which has brought death into the camp of Israel, and overcomes it, subduing his evil impulse and realizing that the root of the problem is a lack of divine unification.
77. In gematria, the word Yizhak has a value of 208. Thus the resh-het of the word "spear" refer, according to the passage in the Ra'aya Meheimna, to Pinhas taking hold of Isaac's attribute, gevurah, the "power" of the left side.
78. Pinhas succeeds in elevating the sparks of hesed. Spelled without the vav, as it is in the biblical text, romah has the numerical value of 248, which is the same as the name Avraham, the patriarch identified with hesed; this gematria reinforces the interpretation of Pinhas' action as bringing about unification and restoring the flow of divine love.
79. As the sparks are elevated, the realm of the "shells" (kelippot) is left without any source of vitality, and so settles into oblivion below. See the Introduction, pp. 47-48.
80. In Ta'anit the story is related that Nahum of Gamzu was sent with a bag of jewels to the Emperor on behalf of the Jewish community. The keepers of the inn where he

spends the night steal the jewels and replace them with dirt. With his typical comment, "This too is for the best," Nahum goes to appear before the Emperor with the bag of earth. Elijah appears and suggests that this might be some of the earth of Abraham which changed into swords (relating Genesis 18:27, "I am but dust and ashes," to Isaiah 41:2, "who has made their swords like dust"). The dirt is carried successfully into battle, and the Emperor sends Nahum home with another bag of jewels. When the innkeepers hear the story, they take more dust to the emperor; it proves to be plain dirt, and they are executed. Ephraim reinterprets the passage's play on words as a reference to the sefirah of hesed; and the simple Nahum of Gamzu, who can find divine love in everything, is presented as the model of the kabbalist able to find the power of hesed in din and to bring about divine unification.

Notes: Va-'Ethannan

1. The sermon begins by addressing two textual "difficulties": the repetition of YHVH, and the seeming lack of function of the infinitive le-'mor, "saying." Among the interpretations of "the Sages," these verses are cited as an example of how one should begin prayer with praise of God and only then proceed to petition (Berakhot 32a, repeated in Zohar 3:260b). Rashi, ad loc., notes that the verb va-'ethannan is one of ten expressions which denote prayer.
2. For another version of this interpretation see Zav, p. 152, and note 41. The verse from 1 Samuel to which Ephraim turns is cited in the Talmud as indicating probable injury; see Pesahim 8b, Hullin 142a.
3. See Solomon's prayer in 1 Kings 3:8-9: "Your servant finds himself in the midst of the people you have chosen. . . . Grant your servant a discerning mind (lev shome'a).". See Pesikta de Rav Kahana, Naḥamu, beginning and end; Kohelet Rabbah 1:16; Berakhot 61a on the function of the various organs, including lev mevin, the understanding heart.
4. R. Abraham Ibn Ezra (a medieval Spanish commentator), in his comment on "I YHVH am in the midst of the land" (Exodus 8:18), uses the examples of rulers who establish themselves in the middle of their kingdoms, and the heart "which rules over the entire body at its center." See also Zohar: 3:161a: "The heart is the strength of the entire body;" Yalkut Shimoni 2:929.
5. Genesis 41:44: "Without you [Joseph], no one shall lift hand or foot in all the land of Egypt."
6. See Zohar 3:220b-221b, comparing Israel to the heart, without which the other nations, the limbs, cannot exist: "The heart is tender and weak; yet it is the life of all the limbs. Only the heart perceives pain and trouble and grief, for it contains life and intelligence." On Israel as the heart of the world see Judah Halevi, Kuzari 2:36.

7. The way of a "good heart" includes the suggestions of the other students: a good eye (generosity), a good associate, a good neighbor, and foresight. All these are like limbs.
8. See Zohar 3:114a: "If the head of the people is good, the whole world is delivered because of them." See also Zohar 2:36b: "If the heads of the people are worthy, it is good for the world and for the people"; Be-Midbar Rabba, 19:28.
9. Va-Yikra Rabbah 7:2 develops this idea in a midrash: "If an ordinary person makes use of broken vessels, it is a disgrace for him, but the vessels used by the Blessed Holy One are deliberately broken, as it is said, 'YHVH is close to those of broken heart' [Psalm 34:19]." Also note Joel 2:13. In the Zohar, the broken heart is central to repentance and to the sweetening of the power of Din. See Tishby, Mishnat ha-Zohar, 2:211.
10. This clause combines references to three biblical verses: Isaiah 35:8, 52:1, and Jeremiah 8:18. The last is particularly apt in this context: "Is not YHVH in Zion, Is not her King within her?" In the Zohar, Zion and Jerusalem are Yesod and Shekhinah; see Tishby, Mishnat ha-Zohar, 1:227.
11. See Isaiah 2:17: "The pride (rum) of humanity shall be humbled; YHVH alone will be exalted in that day." One wonders whether there might not be an additional allusion, through the sound of the word rum, to Rome as a symbol of the spiritual condition opposite that represented by Jerusalem.
12. The phrase from Isaiah 40:2 is reread in light of the grammatical fact that 'al usually means "upon" or "concerning"; thus it becomes possible that "Jerusalem" is part of what is to be said to the heart.
13. See Zechariah 9:8-10: "I will encamp in my house . . . and no oppressor shall ever overrun them again. . . . Raise a shout, fair Jerusalem! Your king is coming to you . . . and his rule shall extend from sea to sea." This image of national salvation becomes a parable of individual liberation from the forces that lead to sin: God's dwelling in the humble heart enables the extension of holiness throughout the body.
14. Constant union is attributed by the Zohar to the stable relationship between Hokhmah and Binah, the divine father and mother (see Zohar 3:4a, 290b; Tishby,

Mishnat ha-Zohar, 1:158-161). Ephraim applies the image to emphasize the close relationship between love and fear of God. On the Zohar's multiple understandings of the connection between love and fear and specific sefirot, see Tishby, Mishnat ha-Zohar, 2:294-8.

15. Thus God does not exact double for offenses -- the problematic possible meaning Ephraim raised initially -- but in fact gives one who repents the additional blessing of acceptance in place of his sins. The double blessing also refers to fear and love, the dual components of the penitent's religious experience.
16. Physical activities and common conversation offer opportunities for connection to the spiritual realm; the zaddik can connect the physical realm with the spiritual so that unity with the divine is not broken. A parallel interpretation in the name of the Ba'al Shem Tov is found in R. Ya'akov Yosef's Ben Porat Yosef 16a; cf. Sefer Ba'al Shem Tov, 2:79b-80b.
17. The last clause adapts Genesis 41:44 and refers to God's presence, or Shekhinah, i.e. the sefirah Malkhut, which alone makes all activity possible (see p. 138). David is the historical representative of Malkhut, "who followed the paths of Torah, carried out the commands of Torah, and conducted the kingdom [malkhuta] properly" (Zohar 3:113a).
18. God's presence is in the smallest thing; human lack is a sign of the lack -- and thus a reminder of the presence -- of Shekhinah. The Ba'al Shem's example is drawn from the Talmudic passage to which Ephraim now turns.
19. Ad heikhan takhlit yissurin: At what point can one's sufferings be considered as chastisement cleansing one of sins so that one will inherit life in the world to come? Even the least annoyance can be so regarded, for example, when one's shirt gets turned inside out, or when one reaches into his pocket for three coins and finds only two. The Talmud's point is that even such irritations can be understood as divine visitation. See Berakhot 5a. The Ba'al Shem re-interprets such events as full of God's presence.
20. The letters of the word havayah are identical with those of YHVH; in addition, the divine name 'elohim and ha-teva', "nature," both have the numerical value of 86 (see p. 75). Both word plays point to the idea that

YHVH is the essential reality underlying all others. Cf. Zohar 3:260b. The phrase "You bring to life, You cause to exist" appears earlier in Kabbalah; see Elijah de Vidas, Reshit Hokhmah (Amsterdam, 1708), Sha'ar ha-Kedushah, 185a; Pardes Rimmonim 6:8; Kalman Bland, Bulletin of the Institute of Jewish Studies 3 (1925), p. 113, note 3.

21. Israel will not only seek YHVH himself but will also seek to unify the divine realm, here symbolized in David's name: The first dalet, representing 'En Sof, vav standing for the six sefirot clustered around Tif'eret, and the last dalet symbolizing the Shekhinah, who through unification will no longer be poor (dalah). See pp. 182-83 above.
22. The second part of the prayer, in Deuteronomy 3:25, is Moses' request to enter into the promised land; the symbolic reference is to the union of Tif'eret (Moses) and Shekhinah ("Land"). According to the Zohar, Moses was himself united in marriage with the Shekhinah (see Zohar 1:21b-22a; 236b; cf. Shabbat 87a, Pesikta de-Rav Kahana 1:1; Tishby, Mishnat ha-Zohar, 2:190-91; Matt, Zohar, p. 237).
23. See Isaiah 56:8.
24. Proverbs 10:25 states "the zaddik is established (yesod) forever." Early Midrash identified the zaddik as the one pillar on which the world rests (Yoma 38b; Hagigah 12b). "When even a single zaddik is among you, you will endure through his merit, and not yourselves alone, but the entire world" (Tanhuma, Nezavim 2). The Zohar identifies this central pillar as the sefirah Yesod, the phallus of the sefirotic body, also called zaddik and related to the righteous individual whose behavior brings about the divine union on which the flow of blessing to the world depends. See Zohar 1:82a, 208a; 2:115b.
25. See pp. 239-42. The basic idea in both passages (much more fully developed in the other) is that innovation in Torah renews the world; the zaddik attains such a level of awareness both of Torah and the world's need that he can make precisely that innovation that is required.
26. The three paragraphs of the Shema comprise 245 words. Repeating the last two words, YHVH 'eloheikhem ("YHVH your God") and adding 'emet, one recites "YHVH, your God, is truth," and thus concludes the public reading

of the Shema and brings the total number of words to 248. This is the traditional number of human limbs and of positive mizvot in the Torah; see Tanhuma, Kedoshim, 6; Makkot 23b; Mishnah 'Oholot 1:8. The Shema opens with the affirmation of God's oneness: "Hear, O Israel! YHVH is our God, YHVH is one"; according to the Zohar, one who prays this prayer with the proper intention unites all the sefirot; see Zohar 2:133b-134b; Tishby, Mishnat ha-Zohar, 2:276-9. Recitation of the 248 words of the Shema fulfills the verse, "All my bones shall say: 'Lord, who is like You?'" (Psalm 35:10); reciting the words to bring about divine unification draws life down from above for all of the limbs.

27. See portion Balak, pp. 180-82.
28. Disunity brings one into connection with what is opposite to God's presence and its resulting life, namely "a strange god" (Psalm 81:10) -- Samael, the demonic counterpart of the Blessed Holy One -- and death. In earlier Midrash, the "strange god" is associated with the evil inclination; see Shabbat 105b; Zohar 3:106 a-b.
29. Part of the verse in its Hebrew word order reads ha-elleh ve-'ameru rak 'am. Ephraim reverses the order of the comments given by the author of the Turim (regarding whom see portion Be-Reshit, note 19).
30. The mishnah rules that vessels may be immersed together and purified except in the case of vessels especially hallowed by their use, which must be immersed separately. It is the image of immersing vessels within vessels which Ephraim extracts for his homily. The Ba'al ha-Turim's statement that the word rak indicates limitation is likewise taken out of its context, a discussion of two legal problems.
31. Mishnah Yoma 8, end, states, "Who makes you clean? Your father in heaven, as it is said, 'I will sprinkle pure water upon you and you will be clean' (Ezekiel 36:25). And it is written, 'O Mikveh of Israel'; as the mikveh purifies the impure so does the Blessed Holy One cleanse Israel." See Zohar 1:33a, which interprets Genesis 1:9 as a description of the sefirot Yesod and Malkhut: all the "waters" flow together in Yesod: "the mikveh is zaddik. . . . R. Yose said, 'Israel is a mikveh'. . . . 'Your people shall all be zaddikim' [Isaiah 60:21]: all zaddikim in reality!" For the Zohar the point is that Israel stimulates the sefirah

Yesod through righteous action so that the divine waters can flow into Malkhut; Ephraim is concerned to show that the purifying function, which has its source in God, can also be exercised by one at the spiritual level "Israel" if there is attachment and unity among the people.

32. The Midrash explains the sacrifice of the red heifer using a parable: "A handmaiden's boy polluted a king's palace. The king said: 'Let his mother come and cleanse the filth.' In the same way the Blessed Holy One said: 'Let the Heifer come and atone for the calf.'" The supernal mother is Binah, also called teshuvah; returning the powers of judgment to their root in Binah sweetens them, reuniting them with the powers of holiness. Cf. the teaching of Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl in Green, Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl, p. 37.
33. See note 14, this portion.
34. See portion Be-Reshit, pp. 103-4, and corresponding notes.
35. The zaddik's role not only embraces the positive demonstration of the mizvot and the Torah, but also includes the duty of wrestling with sin and other manifestations of the evil inclination. One way of doing this was undoubtedly through "warning," i.e., public preaching and reproof (see Katz, Tradition and Crisis, pp. 171-74, and the Introduction), attempting to bring the community into attachment to God, "I am" (see portion Zav, p. 134; Selections, pp. 260-63). Another way was found in the contemplative transformation and "elevation" of the evil within oneself and others (see pp. 276-79).
36. The zaddik manifests the identity of Torah and human being; he becomes an important channel through which the vitality of the Torah is available to all. The linking of person and Torah has roots in Rabbinic thought (Makkot 23b; Tanhuma, Kedoshim 6) and is explicitly stated in the Zohar (e.g., Zohar 3:29b; see portion Be-Reshit above, notes 1 and 3). On the zaddik as "living Torah" see the Selections, pp. 240-41, and the following homilies; Dresner, The Zaddik, pp. 120-28.
37. The year would be 1780 (rather than 1779) if Ephraim wrote during or near the week of portion Va-'Ethannan. This commentary thus precedes the dated sermon for

Passover (in portion Zav) by two years, even though it follows it in order. One can only speculate on the possible sequence of writing of the Degel's various parts. See the Introduction, pp. 3-6.

38. In other words, why mention God's name specifically and in speech when the awareness of God's presence is already in thought? This problem is related to the explanation of why the commandments were multiplied for Israel when the idea of "I am" suffices for the wise (see Zav, pp. 20-24).
39. Isaiah 6:3; Genesis 41:44.
40. See Elijah de Vidas, Reshit Hokhmah (Amsterdam, 1708), Sha'ar ha-Kedushah, 185a (note 19 above); Psalm 103:19.
41. The verse reads slightly otherwise: "Did you not, O our God . . . give [the land] forever to the descendants of Abraham your beloved."
42. The principle of beginning with praise before turning to prayer and petition is stated in Berakhot 32a, illustrated by the prayer of Moses that begins portion Va-'Eṭḥannan (verses 24-25): Moses praises God before requesting entrance into the land.
43. The Kaddish is an oft-recurring and significant prayer glorifying God's name; all of its variant forms begin with the words "Exalted and hallowed be God's great name." Later in the prayer a longer list of verbs extol -- and precede -- the name.
44. Hagigah 5b refers to the inner and outer chambers of God; the inner is named "secret." "Supernal palaces" may also be suggestive of the mystical ascent to the Chariot; see Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, pp. 45-57. On "palaces" expressing degrees of closeness to God in the Zohar see Tishby, Mishnat ha-Zohar, 2:666.
45. See Kohelet 2:14.
46. The holy hayyot in Ezekiel's vision made a great noise with their wings when moving, but "when they stood still, they would let their wings hang down" (1:24-25). In the morning prayer these creatures are described as proclaiming God's holiness and lifting themselves up in response to the Seraphim to praise Him. A midrash in Tanḥuma, Kedoshim, 6, reinterprets the infinitive of the biblical passage -- "when they stood" -- as a

reference to Israel, explaining that the ministering angels let their wings down when Israel praises God in the 'Amidah, the Eighteen Benedictions. Cf. the more involved treatment linking this verse to Israel's prayer in Zohar 3:173a, 228a.

47. The purpose of the second and third words of the blessing is to make apparent what is already known to the wise, namely, that one is actually addressing God, none other than YHVH. All who listen are thus "raised up" to that level at which they too are aware of the presence of YHVH.
48. The clauses of Deuteronomy 10:21 are reversed for homiletical reasons.
49. The movement from lack of awareness, or hiddenness, of God to full awareness of his presence is suggested by the formulation of the blessing, by grammar, and by the verse. The verse begins with "He," which is the third-person pronoun; but in Hebrew "third-person" is nistar, a word that also means "hidden": the identity of the one "blessed" is unknown except to the wise. However, the second word of the blessing is the "you" of direct address, nokhah, "second-person." The verse likewise moves from "He" to "is your God," and the blessing makes clear that "your God" is none other than YHVH. Thus through addressing God directly one becomes aware that he is in relationship with YHVH, whose presence is no longer hidden but revealed; one's praise is actually encounter with God.
50. As above, p. 206, Ephraim refers to the fact that the story of Creation in Chapter 1 of Genesis consistently designates God as 'elohim, which is equivalent through gematria to "nature." Be-reshit bara 'elohim can thus be understood to mean that God created nature by means of wisdom (reshit), which is the Torah and its letters (see pp. 110-11 above). Reading 'Elohim as "nature" suggests, first, that all creation will know YHVH; secondly, it leads to the conclusion that nature itself is filled with YHVH. Ephraim avoids the radical pantheistic identification of God and nature that could be supported by this reading of "YHVH is 'Elohim," in favor of a pan-entheistic emphasis. On panentheism in Hasidic thought see Jacobs, Hasidic Prayer, 8-9, 21; Scholem, The Messianic Idea in Judaism, pp. 238-44; Schatz-Uffenheimer, Ha-Hasidut ke-Mistikah, pp. 22-31; on panentheism in the Kabbalah see Scholem, Kabbalah, pp. 144-52.

51. This comment precedes the rest of the interpretation, even though not logically its starting point, because the verse begins with the unusual two-word conjunction taḥat ki.
52. The verse is interpreted as a reference to the teaching of Torah. It is Torah, which is equivalent to the quickening wisdom of God that enables one who has it to engender life; thus Abraham was able to beget Isaac after the he of the five books of the Torah was added to his name; see pp. 100-1 above. The teaching of Torah also gives life to students: "Students are called 'sons' and the teacher is called 'father'" (Sifre, Va-'Eṭḥannan, 6:7); "One's student is called his son" (Va-Yikra Rabbah 11:7). Through the Torah the teacher has spiritual progeny and is thus "father."
53. "With his presence" can also be read "in his face." See Bereshit Rabba 49:4: "If one has a son who toils in the Torah it is as though he never died."
54. The eternal nature of the Torah finds early expression in midrashim that speak of its pre-existence and role in Creation; see Sifre, 'Ekev, 37; Bereshit Rabba 1, 4, 10; Sifre, Devarim, 48; Mishnah Avot 3:14. These ideas are rooted in biblical and extra-canonical passages such as Proverbs 8:22ff; The Wisdom of Solomon 9:9. That the Torah is eternal was also expressed in teachings which speak of the constant renewal of revelation (Mekhilta, Ba-Hodesh, 9; Shemot Rabbah 28:6; Va-Yikra Rabbah 16:4). This idea of an eternal Torah underlies the many interpretations of both the Rabbis and the kabbalists as to what would happen to the Torah in the time to come; see Urbach, The Sages, 297-314; Scholem, Symbolism, pp. 32-86. The Kabbalah's identification of the Torah as God's name, and its insistence that the divine essence is intertwined with the essential truth of Torah also expresses Torah's eternity, and renders its study a way to encounter the divine.
55. The Torah, which seems to be in a finished state, and then seems completely done away with by analysis and interpretation, emerges very much alive in the multiple meanings to which it gives birth. The interpreter is in fact a midwife: "The zaddikim teach Torah and ethics to God's people; therefore they are called midwives, as if they gave birth" (Degel Maḥane Ephraim, p. 82). Ephraim's term for these "offspring" of the Torah is quite suggestive: they are harbeh peshutei torah, literally, "many simple [or "straightforward"]

meanings of Torah." It is not one of the deeper levels of meaning that the Kabbalah found in the Torah, such as remez or sod (see Scholem, Symbolism, pp. 50-61), that emerges through interpretation, but a new "generation" of plain meanings, each themselves presumably containing new mysteries.

56. The eternity of the Torah lies in the ongoing life of its new "facets" or "faces" (panim).
57. Since both words have the numerical value of 68, the verse itself hints at the life of the "father," the Torah.
58. Late Midrash developed the idea that the Torah was heard in seventy languages (Shabbat 88b) into the notion that every word of the Torah has seventy aspects or "faces" (Numbers Rabbah 13:15). This concept was further elaborated in the Zohar and the Kabbalists of Safed; see Scholem, Symbolism, pp. 62-66. The "offspring" of the preceding commentary, then, are identical with these faces.
59. The focus of the passage in the Ra'aya Meheimna is on a knowledge of God that amounts to divine unification: "What is [knowing] in general? To know that there is a Ruler most high, the Master of the universe and creator of the worlds. . . . And finally, in particular: to know him in particular. 'General' and 'particular' are the beginning and the end, the mystery of masculine and feminine as one. . . . The tikkun of this world is 'general and particular.'" The need of "general" for "particular," and vice versa, refers to the union of Written Torah (Tif'eret) and Oral Torah (Shekhinah); see Zohar 1:246b; Tishby, Mishnat ha-Zohar, 1:154.
60. The "teacher" here is presumably the Ba'al Shem Tov, although the usual reference -- "my master, my grandfather, etc." -- is lacking. The phrase indicating when this teaching was received literally reads: "Indeed, now I heard"; I have assumed that the reference was to a particular time in the past, but the language could conceivably suggest a more recent event and thus a later teacher.
61. Israel are the limbs of the Shekhinah (Zohar 3:231b); therefore whatever happens in the life of Israel is a dimension of the Shekhinah's life. Moreover, each sefirah contains aspects of all the sefirot (see Scholem, Kabbalah, pp. 113-16), and Shekhinah, as the last sefirah, also receives the influx of all the

others. Human abundance thus indicates the flow of divine Hesed in Shekhinah, suffering the predominance of Gevurah, or Din; a mixture reflects the combination of these forces in Tif'eret; similarly, all the other sefirot are also represented in Shekhinah and in Israel's life.

The Shi'ur Komah is the "measure of the body," and refers to early mystical teachings which describe the Glory of God, in some places called the "body" of the Shekhinah, as a supernal human being of fantastic dimension; see Scholem, Kabbalah, pp. 16-17; Major Trends, pp. 63-67. Ephraim's point in combining these images seems to be that the Shekhinah is made complete only by the inclusion of all its "limbs."

62. "This," zot, stands for the Shekhinah (Zohar 3:79b; 58b-59a); the Shekhinah is the only gate by which one comes to God (Zohar 1:72a). One Hasidic interpretation of these ideas is that one's experience reveals the needs of the Shekhinah, and it is for her unification that one should pray; see Jacobs, Hasidic Prayer, pp. 26-29. R. Ya'akov Yosef, who may be the "teacher" referred to here, explains somewhat differently: "'His Glory fills all the earth' [Isaiah 6:3] and nothing great or small is separated from him. . . . Therefore the perfect individual (adam shalem) is able to bring about supernal unifications even in physical activities. . . . This is the meaning of 'In all your ways know him' [Proverbs 3:6], like Adam knew Eve, a unification and a coupling. . . . In each and every level one can unite the attributes above in the mystery of 'With this shall Aaron come into the holy place': from that level on which one is, let him include himself with the generality, who are on these levels, for all are the limbs of Kenesset Yisrael; from there let him pray" (Toledot Ya'akov Yosef, Ba-Ha'alotekha, 137c). Cf. p. 168 above.
63. Katnut, "smallness," is a state of temporary diminution in one's spiritual fervor or attainment, or, as here, in degree of attachment to God. See above p. 116; Scholem, The Messianic Idea in Judaism, pp. 218-22. "First or second," rishon 'o sheni, may refer to degrees of such interruption, or to the repeated experience of falling from devekut.
64. Thus the answer to the question raised by 1 Chronicles 28:9, who could know the least bit about him?, is that one can not only find the divine reflected in one's own experience, but also bring about unification within the

divine realm, as suggested by the word "know," da'. Cf. the explications of Proverbs 3:6, "In all your ways know him" in Sefer Ba'al Shem Tov 1:47b-48a.

65. "Day" refers to Tif'eret, and "night" to Shekhinah; they are referred to as "general" and "specific" in the passage from the Ra'aya Meheimna. One knows to perform acts of unification because the need of Shekhinah is reflected in one's own life. On day and night, cf. p. 149.
66. Cf. 2 Chronicles 30:18. The expression usually signals a comment which the author considers a deep secret, dangerous if not presented properly. Note that his final comment suggests that some type of post-exilic reality exists through "knowledge," a position recalling the Sabbatian belief that messianic time had in fact begun.
67. Ephraim substitutes "all the words of this Torah" for the text's "all of this instruction (mizvah)."
68. The Gemara explains that it is the fear of Heaven which gives value to the pursuits by which a person is judged: hope in the resurrection, exercise of wisdom, fruitfulness, and faith are not operative apart from awe.
69. Adin Steinsaltz comments in his edition of Shabbat, ad loc., "'For what is the good of wormy wheat?'" Wheat without salt would only spoil even if stored in an upper storage room.
70. Cf. Daniel 7:8, where the phrase describes the fourth beast in Daniel's vision!
71. According to the Zohar, Creation "was not completed until Israel received the Torah and the Mishkan was erected" (Zohar 3:117a). This is based on early midrashim, such as that found in Shabbat 88a; see above, portion Be-Reshit, pp. 101-3.
72. Wisdom is called Reshit; Understanding (Binah) is known as Leah; Da'at, Knowledge, is the divine awareness without which yihud is impossible and the individual remains flesh and blood, dam, without connection to God, the 'alef (see portion Zav, pp. 136-37, note 7, and pp. 162-63 and note 63). Repointing the letter sin of Yisrael to shin, the remaining letters spell yesh, "being." The name Israel indicates, then, that existence comes out of the divine "Nothing," which

includes the three divine intelligences, Hokhmah, Binah, and Da'at.

73. Israel's physical existence sustains the world because it enables them to fulfill the mizvot of the Torah; however, materiality in excess of that making God's service possible is destructive (see below, p. 224; Zav, pp. 150-51, 157).
74. The Zohar goes on to explain that God had made earlier worlds and destroyed them (Bereshit Rabba 9:2), but when Israel came the worlds were completed and no longer destroyed, because Israel is attached in devekut to the Blessed Holy One like a son. Ephraim's interpretation is that even the first divine emanation, Wisdom (equated here with Abraham, who is usually identified with Hesed), was not able to exist without Israel. ("Nothing" here refers to Keter; see Scholem, Kabbalah, pp. 94-95, 109.) Israel makes existence possible by making divine Wisdom and Love substantial.
75. Israel also has the power, again symbolized by the letters of its name, to raise all of existence into connection with Hokhmah, Binah, and Da'at -- to return being to divine nothingness -- and thus to transform it; see portion Be-Reshit, pp. 76-77, 80-81, 86, 100-1.
76. See above, pp. 206, 214. Because 'Elohim is identified with only one aspect of divinity, Din, it follows that that which has been brought into existence through it can be changed by the power of YHVH, the unification of all the divine potencies. By unifying the name, the zaddikim can change the course of nature (see Balak, p. 173).
77. The idea seems to be that God can conduct the world on the basis of more than one determining cause, referring perhaps to the different aspects of divine power (see portion Zav, pp. 139-40).
78. The point of the discussion in Sanhedrin is that nothing, including magic, can lessen God's power. Ephraim adds the familiar interpretation that only God's presence makes any act possible, and that this presence is all-pervasive, even in evil. By thus knowing YHVH in all its actions, Israel makes him known to the world.
79. Setting aside physicality beyond that absolutely necessary to sustain life is a common theme of kabbalistic piety. In the Zohar, the ideal is to nourish the

soul with Wisdom: "Happy is the body that can nourish itself on food of the soul! . . . This food flows from Wisdom on high" (Zohar 2:61b-62a in Matt, Zohar, pp. 113-16). This tendency to strictly limit the physical is explained in Poyetto's condensation of Reshit Hokhmah: "We must divest ourselves of material concerns, all of which stem from the realm of evil. We will be able to cleave to God only when we sanctify ourselves . . . for God is holy and purely spiritual in nature and you are of a material nature. How can that which is spiritual bind itself to that which is material unless a person sanctifies himself and practices abstinence from worldly things?" (Safed Spirituality, ed. Lawrence Fine, pp. 102-3). "The essence of love consists in surrendering one's soul and body for the sanctification of God" (ibid., p. 136; also see pp. 123, 130-31). Human engagement in holiness through prayer and the performance of mizvot bring about the ultimate mending of all the worlds.

80. Cf. Zohar 3:45a, in which the phrase "with God ('elohim) and with men" is interpreted as referring to Din and Esau; in Bereshit Rabba 78:3, Jacob is congratulated for overcoming all celestial and human beings. Ephraim's interpretation is based on the prior identification of 'elohim with nature.
81. Abraham's overcoming of nature through attachment to "I am" is explained in portion Zav, pp. 159-60. I have not traced this particular book.
82. The sense of the Zohar passage is that wisdom and Torah are intimately connected with the birth of Issachar: "'I have surely hired you' to take the body from him. And who is that? The Torah. 'I have surely hired you': you, your very body. 'I have surely hired you': to bear your likeness. Therefore one who engages in the Torah inherits the world that is coming and the inheritance of Jacob. They inherit the world that is coming, for it is written, 'Issachar': yesh sakhar: 'There shall be a reward for your toil' [Jeremiah 31:16; cf. Tanhuma, Shemot, 30]. And it is said, 'endowing those who love me with being.'" Jacob is identified with the sefirah Tif'eret, the Torah; therefore "hiring" Jacob is equal to appropriating the Torah's wisdom, and bears fruit.
83. The Zohar identifies Malkhut as zedek (see Zohar 2:139b-140a). Giving charity to one who is poor gives him life; above it arouses the rescue of Shekhinah, the sefirah with nothing of its own, from its deadly

separation from Tif'eret. Shekhinah and Tif'eret are united, the final he and the vav of the divine name joined to complete the YHVH; "zedek is not restored nor made complete except through zedakah" (see Zohar 3:113b; Tishby, Mishnat ha-Zohar, 2:458-460). The passage in Zohar 1:90b similarly interprets zedakah, righteousness, as the establishment of a connection "between 'above' and 'below' in order to unite them as one"; because of this connection the powers of judgment are considered compassion (and Abraham is able to have Isaac).

84. The Zohar passage reads: "One who occupies himself with the Torah occupies himself with Him, with his name, and one who keeps himself away from the Torah is far from the Blessed Holy One. Come and see: 'To you, YHVH, belongs zedakah': . . . What is zedakah? The place in which all faces shine united to Him. He is united with all of them. . . . 'But to us, shameful-ness': the place in which all shining faces are far from Him." The point once again is that zedakah is related both to divine unification and to devekut.
85. Both lanu and 'elohim have the numerical value of 86. This gematria undergirds the interpretation that "what has befallen us (lanu)" is that the wicked have turned compassion into din (identified with the name 'elohim; see portion Yitro, note 13). That the wicked turn raḥamim into din is a common idea in the Zohar (2:63a; 3:30b-31a, 137b, 207b), rooted in earlier Midrash such as Bereshit Rabba 33:3: "Woe to the wicked, who turn the attribute of compassion into the attribute of justice. . . . Happy are the righteous who turn the attribute of judgment into the attribute of compassion." Commenting on Genesis 8:1, Rashi notes that the zaddikim turn din into raḥamim through their prayer (see Sukkah 14a). The Zohar notes that "as long as the zaddikim are among a generation the aspect of judgment cannot rule them" (Zohar Ḥadash, Be-reshit, 22a (Midrash ha-Ne'elam)).
86. The Talmud notes that all are sustained out of God's righteous liberality except for the zaddikim, who are sustained by dint of their own virtue; because they have such merit, they are called "far from zedakah." Ephraim interprets this to mean that they create zedakah for themselves by turning judgment into compassion.
87. The verse hints at the message, which is a simplification of the previous references. The future tense

indicates something that will come about; what will come about is divine unification and the transformation of the power of judgment, bringing the flow of compassion into the world; the means is that of observing the mizvot of the Torah.

88. Cf. Proverbs 16:15.
89. In light of the midrash from Avodah Zarah, the verse is read as a promise that those who are evil will be punished. In the time to come God will not reveal only his back (Exodus 33:20-23) but will turn his face to all, and its light will destroy the wicked.

Notes: Selections

1. Degel Maḥane Ephraim (Jerusalem edition), p. 9.
2. The four types are: one who attends but does not practice, one who practices but does not attend, the ḥasid who does both, and the evil one who does neither. I have not located the reference in Ya'akov Yosef's writings; but see portion Zav, p. 167.
3. The saying in this form is found in Zohar Ḥadash, Yitro 55 b-d (Tikkunei Zohar); Tishby, Mishnat ha-Zohar, 1:116-8. The idea is frequent in rabbinic midrashim such as Shemot Rabbah 2:5; Be-Midbar Rabbah 12:4.
4. Through this realization, one is able to attach oneself to God, and to the divine sparks within all aspects of life, thereby removing the source of evil's vitality.
5. See Rosh Ha-Shanah 16b: "Three books are opened on Rosh ha-Shanah: one for the completely wicked, one for the completely righteous, and one for those in between." The righteous are inscribed for life and the wicked for death; those in between have the period between Rosh ha-Shanah and Yom Kippur before their merit is weighed.
6. One can find the light of God's presence even when it is concealed, especially in the words of prayer. See Yitro, p. 127 and note 56; cf. Zav, p. 170.
7. Degel Maḥane Ephraim, p. 16.
8. Pesaḥim 50b; Sanhedrin 105b.
9. See Bava Batra 10a: "You are called 'sons' and 'servants.' When you do the will of God (Makom) you are called 'sons,' and when you do not do God's will you are called 'servants.'" See also Mishnah Avot 1:3.
10. Study "for its own sake" is study for the unification of Shekhinah and the Blessed Holy One. Their union enables divine providence to descend; Hesed and holiness overcome the forces of judgment and evil, and the divine is no longer concealed. See portion Be-Reshit, pp. 88-89, Yitro, pp. 106-9.

11. "Her building up" may refer both to the waxing of the Shekhinah (also called the Moon) through the unification brought about by study for its own sake, and to the verse and study for its own sake as symbolized by Sarah.
12. See Exodus 14:8; "a little with kavvanah" is explained in what follows (p. 236).
13. Torah equals 611; haratah amounts to 610, but they are equivalent when one adds 1 for the word itself.
14. That is, the zaddikim study for its own sake, the "level of 'mistress,'" and are held in low esteem by those who are swollen with Torah, even though they are on the "level of the maid."
15. Cf. Daniel 8:12: "Truth was thrown to the ground." This line is omitted in the Jerusalem edition, mistakenly replaced with a repeat of a line that appears later on the same page.
16. Not only do those who study without kavvanah despise the zaddikim, they despise the Shekhinah herself!
17. Psalm 15:4. The earlier texts read yir'at YHVH, "the fear of God," but it seems clear that the reference is to the verse, and I have emended accordingly.
18. Tur and Shulhan Arukh, Ben-Zeav edition 7:14b; Berakhot 5b.
19. See Mishnah Avot 6:1.
20. See portion Balak, pp. 187.
21. Degel, p. 19.
22. This biblical commentator points out that the usual usage is to place "the one seen" before "the one who sees," and to say va-yera' YHVH 'elav; here, however, the order is reversed: va-yera' 'elav YHVH.
23. The phrase "terebinths of Mamre" is interpreted as referring to rebellious people on the basis of a hyper-literal reading of Deuteronomy 20:19 -- "the tree of the field is man" -- and the similarity of the word "Mamre" to the root m-r-h, to rebel, offend, defy.
24. Nistar, the Hebrew grammatical term indicating the

third-person masculine singular, also means "hidden" or "concealed."

25. The Shekhinah; see Zohar 1:103b; Tishby, Mishnat ha-Zohar, 1:243-4, 2:293-296.
26. See Deuteronomy 6:7: "You shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk on the way," and Rashi, ad. loc.
27. On colors and the sefirot, see above, portion Be-Reshit, note 83.
28. Degel, pp. 32-33.
29. 'Et ha-shamayyim ve-'et ha-'arez is understood as emphasizing the fact that God created not just the things of heaven, but those of earth as well (see Bereshit Rabba 1:14). On the Torah as the instrument of creation see Bereshit Rabba 1:1; above portion Be-Reshit, pp. 75-76.
30. See above, portion Va-'Ethannan, pp. 221-225.
31. In other words, a particular divine attribute drawn forth when the student cleaves to that sefirah; "The impulse from below calls forth that from above" (Zohar 1:64a). Thus it is the quality of one's kavvanah ("concentration" or "direction") and of one's attachment to God which is the determining factor. The kind of concentrated contemplation involved in such study could be achieved through 'attachment to the letters' (see above, portion Yitro, note 8; Jacobs, Hasidic Prayer, pp. 74-78).
32. See above, portion Va-'Ethannan, note 23.
33. Me-toratan shel banim, an alternative reading of the passage understanding the particle min- not in its comparative sense, but as a preposition.
34. The point subtly made here is that the conversation of God's servants itself is worthwhile because it becomes Torah. See the previous selection.
35. Degel, pp. 34-35.
36. See, for example, Zafenat Paneah 83a; cf. Sefer Ba'al Shem Tov, Bereshit, ¶¶ 158-166 (1:51a-52b).
37. This verb is omitted in the Jerusalem edition.

38. See Numbers 12:7-8: Moses is "trusted throughout [God's] household. With him I [God] speak mouth to mouth . . . and he beholds the likeness of YHWH." Here Moses is the type of the zaddik.
39. The transformation of evil is accomplished by raising up the spark of holiness within it (see Selections, pp. 229-31, 274-75). The idea is no longer to turn away from evil, but to meet and redeem it; the verse is re-read: "remove from evil [the evil within it] and make [it] good."
40. R. Akiba interprets the 'et in the verse as a reference to talmidei hakhamim, who should also be revered.
41. Noting that the word is written defectively, Rashi adds a midrashic comment from Avodah Zarah 11a: "proud ones" or "lords" (ge'im) refers to Antoninus and Rabbi, the descendants of Esau and Jacob. Ephraim rereads the remark as a reference to pride.
42. That is, one conceived that he was serving God, and became swollen with pride.
43. Kohelet Rabbah 4:13 interprets this verse as follows: "'Better is a poor and wise child': the good inclination. Why is it called a 'child'? Because it attaches itself to one only from the age of 13. 'Poor': because all do not obey it. 'Wise': because it teaches human beings the right way. 'Than an old and foolish king': the evil inclination. Why is it called 'king'? Because all obey it. 'Old': because it attaches itself to one from youth to old age. 'Foolish': because it teaches one the way of evil." Cf. Nedarim 32b; Zohar 1:110b. The well-known comment in Midrash Avot 4:1 also informs this explication: "Who is mighty? One who conquers his [evil] urge."
44. Degel, p. 41.
45. See above, portion Va-'Ethannan, p. 226 and corresponding notes.
46. The value of the letters in both sullam and mamon is 136. The Ba'al ha-Turim's commentary characteristically suggests five other gematriot for the word sullam; in regard to the equivalency developed here the author notes, "sullam equals both money and poverty ('oni), for one [i.e., the giver] is made humble as the other is raised up."

47. YHVH = 26, Adonai = 65, and their union -- the union of Tif'eret and Shekhinah -- is thus represented in 91.
48. Degel, p. 42.
49. Ephraim ignores the conclusion of Rashi's remark: ". . . I would not have slept in such a holy place."
50. In a preceding comment on this verse, Ephraim explains that "the redemption is when God reveals Himself by means of the light of the Torah . . . that is, one will be awakened from sleep for the Torah's light and the revealing of God, have dawned" (Degel, p. 41).
51. Yevamot 49b and parallels.
52. Degel, p. 48.
53. The Master of the Good Name (Ba'al Shem Tov) uses not an incantation but faith to cross a river (the Dneister?). The numerical equivalency of "with my staff" (ve-makeli) and Ya'akov, 182, suggests that Jacob crosses the Jordan using his name, which is, however, the attribute of truth, Tif'eret.
54. Degel, p. 48.
55. The midrash relates that when, in the time to come, God comes to judge Esau, Esau "will wrap himself in his tallit like an elder and come sit with Jacob," as it is written, "Should your nest be set among the stars" (Obadiah 1:4) and "'stars' can only mean Jacob." The midrash relates what Jacob says at that point; Ephraim turns to the end of the verse from Obadiah: "Even from there I will pull you down, declares YHVH."
56. Rashi, commenting on Exodus 32:7, explains that it was the "mixed multitude" of converts that Moses had received and that had come up from Egypt with Israel (Ex. 12:38) who were responsible for the sin of the calf. His comment is based on the midrash in Shemot Rabbah 42:6. In the Zohar the mixed multitude is related to sitra atra; see Zohar 2:49b, 191b.
57. Those who only imitate the outer trappings of piety, even though within Israel, nonetheless stand condemned as Esau.
58. Degel, p. 53.

59. Nizhiut is the word used here, which literally means an eternity; the word can also mean "infinity." The Torah is usually described as eternal, yet it is clear that for Ephraim its ever-new, never-failing, infinite succession of interpretations is of central importance. See Va-Jethannan, pp. 215-17.
60. Here quoting Exodus 18:20, which is an earlier parallel of the verse in Jeremiah.
61. In a previous comment, pp. 42-43, Ephraim relates the verse's megurei to megurah, a "storehouse" to which produce is gathered, concluding that the word refers to the "holy unifications" which Abraham had brought about.
62. When the Shekhinah is in union with the other sefirot, the power of judgment and of the demonic "other side" is destroyed.
63. Jacob settles in the aspect of truth, the sefirah of Tif'eret or Rahamim, and there is able to sweeten the attribute of Isaac, Din (judgment) or awe. See Degel, p. 53.
64. Degel, p. 59.
65. Shenatayim itself means two years; moreover, the use of the perfect verbal form following "Pharaoh" calls attention to the name.
66. See above, portion Balak, note 12.
67. The interpretation of this verse as a reference not simply to the six days of Creation but to the six sefirot from Hesed to Yesod appears frequently in the Zohar (1:247a; 2:89b; 3:94b). Its source is in Bahir, §82. The gematria equates "year," shanah, and sefirah, both equal to 355. Thus the phrase shanatayim yamim refers to the union of the sefirah Malkhut with the other six "days" (yamim), the six sefirot including the Blessed Holy One.
68. The letters of "Pharaoh" spell peh ra', the "mouth of evil."
69. Degel, p. 61.
70. The 39 labors are presumably those involved in erecting the desert sanctuary and forbidden on the Sabbath. The 39 curses may be related to the 39 powers of impurity, the adornments of Lilith (Zohar 3:194a; Zohar Hadash,

- Balak, 55a), which turn into punishments (see Matt, Zohar, p. 78).
71. Binah is the sefirah from which all the others are emanated and in which all, therefore, are "included and united." With Hokhmah, Binah exists above the realm in which separate entities are distinguishable. Binah is the world of undivided thought in which the limitations and distinctions from below are dissolved. On Binah as the world of thought, see Schatz, ha-Hasidut ke-Mistikah, pp. 121-28; above, Balak, p. 113.
 72. The "seven ears" are interpreted as referring to the seven lower sefirot, through which one ascends in contemplation to Binah and Hokhmah, the divine intelligences or mohin (along with Da'at). Reaching this level, the mystic's consciousness is dissolved in the divine.
 73. Degel, p. 67.
 74. Sefer Yosifon is an anonymous work of the tenth century which describes life in the second temple period. It was attributed to Josephus, whose works are sometimes referred to by the author, and was frequently cited by medieval commentators.
 75. The oil stands for wisdom because oil and holiness are related in Scripture, and holiness is identified with the sefirah of Wisdom, Hokhmah, in the Zohar (2:121a). The author of the Zohar also speaks of Wisdom, called "holy," as the source of the divine flow, which is called "the holy anointing oil" (2:155a-b). The point is that both the success against the Greeks and the miracle of the oil that burned for eight days are manifestations of the power of holy Wisdom.
 76. Degel, p. 72.
 77. Sparks of the sefirot have fallen into the material realm according to Lurianic kabbalah; it is the love of God, Hesed, which gives vitality to all forms of sexual desire and behavior. The hasid can become aware of the true source of such thoughts and actions, and "raise" the sparks of Hesed back to their root; in bringing about this reunification, he enables true hesed to flow from on high. Cf. below, pp. 264-66. The phrase "love and compassion filling his glory" is from the Sephardic version of the prayer 'El Adon, which is itself referring to Isaiah 6:3.

78. One at a higher level, a zaddik, raises not only the sparks in his own thought and life, but the sparks of others as well.
79. By withstanding sexual temptation, Joseph became the model of righteous behavior: Joseph the zaddik (cf. Yoma 35b; Ginzberg, Legends of the Jews 5:324-5). In the Zohar Joseph attains and represents the sefirah of Yesod, also called zaddik; see Zohar 2:258a; 3:296a (Idra Zuta).
80. He performs hesed by raising the sparks of divinity and thus bringing about the union of the sefirot. The Zohar (2:114b) defines the hasid as one who performs hesed with his creator. See above, portion Zav, p. 140.
81. Degel, pp. 73-74. Ephraim rearranges the biblical text, putting "embraced" before "kissed."
82. The aspects of the zaddik's role emphasized here-- supervision and rebuke -- accord with traditional images of religious leadership; see above, portion Yitro, p. 7 (note 21), and portion Zav, pp. 11-13.
83. An alternate reading would be: "They were too dim (kavedo) to really see the deeds of Israel." In context, however, it is clear that the zaddikim see Israel's behavior and are heavy (kaved) with the responsibility to address the situation.
84. Combining two citations: Isaiah 60:21: "Your people are all righteous"; and 'Eruvin 19a: "the fire of Gehenna has no power over the transgressors in Israel, as it is said, 'Your temples are like a pomegranate' [Song of Songs 4:7]. Read not 'your temples,' but 'your empty ones,' who are as full of mizvot as a pomegranate." Cf. Berakhot 57a.
85. See Genesis 41:51-52: "Joseph named the first born Manasseh, meaning, 'God has made me forget completely my hardship and my parental home.' And the second he named Ephraim, meaning, 'God has made me fertile in the land of my affliction.'"
86. The evil inclination is the older; see above, p. 246, and note 43.
87. Degel, pp. 83-84.
88. Boasting (hitpa'arut) and pride contain sparks of Tif'eret, "beauty," fear is at root Gevurah, "Power"

- (also known as Pahad, "Fear"), and lust is from Hesed, "Love." In these very corruptions aspects of divine life are revealed; laying bare the "root" of the strange thought leads the hasid back into connection with the sefirotic realm. Full discussion of strange thoughts is found in Jacobs, Hasidic Prayer, ch. 9; Weiss, "The Beginning of the Hasidic Way" (Hebrew), Zion, v. 16, pp. 88-103; Piekarz, Bi-Ymei Zemiḥat ha-Hasidut, ch. 6
89. Israel is the lily surrounded by the thorns of the other nations, who will be burned in the time to come (Va-Yikra Rabba, 23:5). Israel are righteous, and are like 'clean wheat' fit for storage; Egypt (i.e., the other nations) are filth, worthless grain fit to be burned (Tanḥuma, Be-Midbar 19; Be-Midbar Rabbah 4:1). In the Zohar, the bush is equated with the powers of judgment and the demonic (Zohar 2:21b).
 90. Moses "turning aside" receives a double interpretation: he turns to look into the strange thought and the divine is revealed to him; but he also learns that he must turn aside the evil -- peel it off as one takes off one's sandals -- and bring the spark in the thought to its supernal root.
 91. The desire of the sparks to be reunited with the realm above is a feature of the Lurianic doctrine of Tikkun, which Hasidism reinterprets. The sparks are now seen 1) as adhering to everything which belongs to one and "thrusting" themselves upon one, and 2) as cause to embrace, in a particular contemplative fashion, evil thoughts, an idea close to the Sabbatian doctrine of "holy sin." See Jacobs, Hasidic Prayer, pp. 106-08; Scholem, The Messianic Idea in Judaism, pp. 186-94.
 92. Degel, p. 89.
 93. See Scholem, Symbolism, pp. 37-44, who quotes Joseph Gikatilla: "The whole Torah is a fabric of appellatives . . . woven from the various names of God" (Sha'arei 'Orah 2b on p. 42). On Torah's ever-changing interpretation, see above, portion Be-Reshit, p. 95; portion Va-'Eṭḥannan, pp. 216-17; Scholem, Symbolism, pp. 50-65.
 94. See portion Balak, note 45.
 95. The Shekhinah is called "covenant" in the Zohar (1:89a, 117a). The Blessed Holy One "remembers" his covenant, and is united with Shekhinah (1:120b), ending her exile.

96. In other words, God Himself is the innermost core of the vitality that is in turn the core of the human being; but Israel are the limbs of the Shekhinah (Zohar 3:14a, 231b). Therefore through "feeling" the needs of humanity, which reflect the need of the Shekhinah, God is still able to become aware of her suffering. Ephraim presents this reinterpretation as one suited for the lesser spiritual stage of his day, yet the radical immanence of God that he describes within the feelings of each individual is at least as daring as that of knowing and contemplating Shekhinah in one's life.
97. Degel, p. 100. Other interpretive comments of Ephraim on this verse have been translated by Jacobs, Hasidic Thought, pp. 47-48.
98. Resh spelled backwards is shir, "song," and gelei can mean either "uncovered" or "revealed."
99. Degel, pp. 105-6. The verse can also be read as follows: "They said to one another, 'What is it?' for they did not know what it was."
100. The person thinks that God requires a physical cause in order to fulfill his assurance to him.
101. The idea of God as the "reason of all reasons" was prevalent in medieval Jewish philosophy. In the body of the Zohar the designation of God as 'En Sof, the Infinite, is predominant; but in the Ra'aya Meheimna and Tikkunei Zohar, 'En Sof is frequently characterized as the "reason of all reasons," and addressed as the personal God of theism, the highest cause and creator (see Tikkunei Zohar, Second Introduction). Tishby points out the greater sense of divine immanence, and the breakdown of the divisions between unfathomable Divinity, the sefirotic realm, and creation, which are inherent in this development (Mishnat ha-Zohar, 1:112-116).
102. The Zohar speaks of the "world above" (Binah) as Mi, "Who," and the "world below, the soul of all that lives (Shekhinah) as Mah, "What" (Zohar 2:138a). See also Zohar 1:2a; Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, pp. 220-21. Ephraim's interpretation is more straightforward: God is the "what" of life's events.
103. Using alef in spelling out the two he's and the vav of the tetragrammaton, the total of all the letters is 45, m-h. Mah thus becomes a hint of YHVH, the 'aluf of the world.

104. In gematria, amen equals 91, which is the numerical value of adding together 'Adonai (Shekhinah) and YHVH (The Blessed Holy One); see Zohar 2:178a: the true intention of saying Amen should be to unite the holy name. It is similar, Ephraim reasons, to see only God rather than any other cause; had Israel been aware they would not have wondered what the manna was, but would have understood that it was actually God's concealed presence and would have spelled "manna" with an alef accordingly.
105. Degel, p. 119.
106. Tanhuma, Beshallah 20: "The Torah was given to be interpreted only by those who ate manna, for they had no need for work or for trade."
107. The model of those who have no worry about making a living and are thus able to keep God always before their eyes are the newly married men, who traditionally went to live with their in-laws while completing their studies. The fact that this period of supported study coincided with adolescence, entry into married life, and intense involvement with a teacher and a religious community is just beginning to be examined; the fervor of the Hasidic and other movements of the era, such as the Haskalah (Enlightenment), must be understood in part as the result of such factors. I am indebted to David Biale for these insights, which were part of a lecture given at the Graduate Theological Union in February, 1986.
108. Degel, pp. 120-21.
109. So Rashi on the verse.
110. On removing oneself from any covering in uniting the Shekhinah and the Blessed Holy One see Tikkunei Zohar 58 (92a); Zohar 3:28a. Special attention in reciting the Shema¹ was to be given to the length and inner intention of the word "one" ("Hear, O Israel: YHVH is our God, YHVH is one"); see Zohar 2:134b, 216b.
111. I have not located the source of this reference to R. Akiba.
112. The 248 words of the Shema¹ correspond to the 248 positive commandments of the Torah and the 248 human limbs. As noted in Zohar Hadash ('Aharei Mot, 59a), "Each and every word of the Shema¹ brings the divine

flow into each one of the limbs of one who recites it properly." See portion Va-'Ethannan, note 26.

113. Shemot Rabbah 22:3 notes that one reciting the Shema⁴ should recall not only the departure from Egypt but also the plague of the first-born and the division of the sea. The liberation of the divine sparks from the realm of the shells is, Ephraim teaches, the true meaning of this intention.
114. The eighteen blessings of the 'Amidah follow the Shema⁴ in the liturgy. The idea is that the completed unification causes these blessings to flow forth into the world. Significantly, Ephraim transposes the normal number yod-het to het-yod, hai ("life"); the blessings of life flow from divine unification.
115. Reciting the Shema⁴ in this manner brings about not only the union of the Blessed Holy One and the Shekhinah, but also the cleaving of the one at prayer to God, the root of his being. The images in this sentence are drawn from the Song of Songs 8:4,6, and the Zohar's description of devekut based upon those verses (Zohar 2:124b).
116. The opening homily to this Torah portion is a discussion of two opposing approaches to life: discarding that which is essential to grab hold of the pleasures of life such as eating and drinking; and always looking and working only to unite the bride and groom, the Blessed Holy One and Shekhinah. One who follows this latter, essential course "sets himself apart from that which is secondary and from attachments," to which Ephraim finds reference in the continuation of the verse.
117. The comparison is between stripping off garments to enjoy physical union, and even greater willingness to strip away extraneous pleasures to enter into union with God. See Song of Songs 8:6: "Passion is mighty as Sheol"; cf. Ecclesiasticus 14:16: "Give and receive and take your ease, for in Sheol there is no pleasure."
118. Degel, pp. 122-23.
119. Devekut, in other words, is essential; religious life centered on anything else is by definition idolatry. See above, portion Balak, pp. 187-89. Only devekut keeps one from falsehood.

120. This radical interpretation of the verse replaces the ideal of turning away from evil with that of transforming it. See note 39 above; Piekarz, Bi-Ymei Zemiḥat ha-Ḥasidut, pp. 233-41.
121. In other words, failure to raise the sparks can end only in engaging these things on a wholly physical level, stirring up gluttony, lust, etc. In context, the passage from Deuteronomy quoted here ties the breaking of this ideal to idolatry as well: "YHVH alone did guide him, no alien god at His side . . . He fed him honey from the rock . . . But Yeshurun grew fat and kicked . . . he forsook God . . . and incensed Him with alien [gods]" (Deuteronomy 32:12-16).
122. Exodus 25:8. God will dwell not in the tabernacle, but among the people, betokham, literally, "within them"--within them, here, because they themselves are the boards of the tabernacle.
123. Shittim and satan both have the numerical value of 359, and therefore the phrase is reinterpreted to read, "the counsels of satan."
124. Degel, p. 124.
125. The direct object marker 'et before YHVH is interpreted as meaning that something additional is indicated, namely, fear of the wise.
126. The passage in Berakhot refers to Deuteronomy 10:12, and asks how Moses can speak as if the fear of heaven were a little thing. The answer is that it was so in regard to Moses. The Ba'al Shem interprets the gemara to say that it was a little thing for those attached to Moses, because in fearing him they were drawn into devekut, attachment with Shekhinah, the awe within.
127. See below, pp. 88-89.
128. Rashi interprets "bile" or "bitterness," marah, as dread (cf. mora'), and explains that the teacher is to cause his students to fear him. Elsewhere, Ephraim notes, "As long as Israel look above, that is, to the wise, and subordinate their hearts . . . all the more will they be in awe of their Father in heaven, for the fear of the wise . . . is like the fear of his Father" (Degel, p. 127).
129. Degel, p. 143.

130. Megillah 13a.
131. Moses says "And what (mah) are we" in Exodus 16:7, a passage emphasizing his humility (see Hullin 89a). Mah, however, is also numerically equivalent to the tetragrammaton "spelled out" using alef (see note 103 above); this "expansion" of the name is a kind of revelation. Moses is identified with Da'at, the divine intelligence of knowledge or awareness, by which all revelation is made possible.
132. The spelling out of the Name involves ten letters, which suggest the ten "words" or "sayings" by which the world was created (Mishnah Avot 5:1), and the ten lights, the sefirot.
133. See above, portion Be-Reshit, pp. 81-82.
134. The midrash on Job 41:10 is much clearer in the gemara; here the line between waking and sleeping seems blurred.
135. The word Leviathan suggests those who accompany (melavvim) God, the zaddikim.
136. Degel, p. 145.
137. Menahot 110 reads: "It is the same whether one does much or little, so long as he directs his heart to heaven." In other words, the inward intent of hasidic life and prayer makes up for any lack of quantity in a study, and is sufficient work in and of itself.
138. Degel, p. 148.
139. This commentator notes that the verse actually reads va-yikra 'el-mosheh va-yedabber, without mentioning who the one who called was; this was unnecessary in the light of the midrash cited, because the call to Moses was itself the distinguishing mark that the great ones of Israel were expecting, marking Moses as God's favorite.
140. The 'alef at the end of va-yikra' is written in a small size according to the Masoretic tradition. To Ephraim, the alef's smallness suggests both the humility of Moses and God's self-limitation so that his presence in the world can be revealed.
141. A reference to Ya'akov Yosef of Polnoyye (see the index of names cited at end of the Jerusalem edition).

142. The "saying of the world" is a remark in Yiddish, perhaps a slogan of the Mitnaggedim.
143. The root 'alaf means "learning": thus, the Hasidim learn, and become, as the letter's size indicates, constantly smaller.
144. Degel, p. 165.
145. Da'at, "knowledge," is the state of awareness in which God is revealed and recognized. One who attains such a state, like Moses, is able to attach himself to divinity and thus deprive evil of its power. See the Introduction, pp. 53-55.
146. A previous comment in the Degel (ibid.) interprets the verse as follows: "'About the goat' can be understood from the expression '[Babylon . . . will be like Sodom and Gomorrah . . .] there goats will dance' [Isaiah 13:19-21], that is, shells." Cf. Leviticus 16:8.
147. Degel, pp. 183-84.
148. A "stranger" stands outside any specific community. In what follows, God is likewise presented as a stranger, one of the more universalistic notes among all Ephraim's sermons. The point, however, is that one should cultivate the relationship of a stranger toward the things of this world.
149. On the Blessed Holy One (Tif'eret), the individual, and the soul as strangers who return to their place in Teshuvah (Binah and "repentance"), see Zohar 3:278a.
150. Degel, p. 190.
151. Presumably R. Nahman of Horodenka, but possibly Nahman of Kossov. See Joseph Weiss, "A Circle of Pneumatics in Pre-Hasidism," Journal of Jewish Studies 8 (1957), pp. 199-213. On confusion between the teachings of the two Nahmans see Piekarz, Bi-Ymei Zemiḥat ha-Ḥasidut, pp. 22-32.
152. The clear distinction between "the minor and major states of man" is discussed by Scholem (The Messianic Idea in Judaism, pp. 219-22). Here it should be noted that the state of "smallness," katnut, is judged to be not only a fall from full spiritual attainment, as Scholem notes, but also as an inappropriate state, one from which it is clearly better not to learn. There is

no intentional descent into katnut here as is mentioned below (pp. 294-295), nor is there the sense seen above (Yitro, pp. 115-17) that the teacher can be approached at all times because his katnut is gadlut for another.

153. One of the indications in the text suggesting that Ephraim was of weak health.
154. Degel, pp. 192-93.
155. In other words, by going through periods of separation from God -- "smallness" or "concealment" -- one is able not only to return to his former state of achievement, but to surpass it.
156. Referring, perhaps, to Isaiah 65:11.
157. One's "fall" in spiritual level is understood as a loving act of God for one's strengthening; the difficulty of maintaining devekut is incorporated into theodicy.
158. Possibly referring to 'Eruvin 55b.
159. Teru'at melekh bo is translated by the Targum to read "the Shekhinah of their King is among them," and Rashi notes that the word teru'ah is an expression of companionship (re'ut); in both respects the word expresses the joining together of God and people (see above, portion Balak, pp. 178, 189).
160. Degel, pp. 193-4.
161. In contrast to the last selection, teru'ah refers here only to shattering; teki'ah expresses joining. In the preceding teaching on Numbers 10:6, Ephraim explains that teru'ah refers to torah 'ayin, the 70 facets of the Torah which show the way to proceed not only in this world but in the worlds above. Thus the phrase "teru'ah shall be blown (yitke'u) for their journeying" is interpreted as follows: "'shall be blown' (yitke'u) expresses joining 'for their journeying': in other words, by means of the light of Torah one goes and journeys from world to world" (Degel, p. 193). This association of teki'ah and unification is perhaps rooted in Numbers 10:3: "When both [trumpets] are blown (take'u) the whole community will assemble before you."
162. Degel, pp. 250-52.

163. See above, portion Zav, note 14; Zohar 1:74a, 246b.
164. See Tikkunei Zohar, 6 (21a). Shekhinah is the mother, who in union with Tif'eret gives birth and suck to the souls of Israel (Zohar 3:7a, 74a, 297a).
165. Dero'in is the Aramaic form of zero'ot, "arms," referring to the two "arms" of the sefirotic body.
166. The waters of Shiloah are suggested by the consonants of the verb; Sanhedrin 94b equates these waters with the reign (Malkhut) of the house of David, a symbol in Kabbalah for Shekhinah.
167. The focus shifts from the care of the Shekhinah for her children to the religious imperative of prayer for the Shekhinah, which releases the flow of blessing from above (see above, pp. 267-69). The Shekhinah is also called the ocean into which the streams of the other divine attributes flow; uniting the Shekhinah which gives vitality to all one's actions to its root above allows these living waters to enter the world below. See Mishnah Avot 6:1.
168. These are the worlds or stages through which creation passes in expanding from a hidden point to the material cosmos: the world of "emanation" is that of the sefirot; "creation" that of the divine throne and the chariot; "formation" is an intermediary stage in the progression toward the world of "making" or "action," the terrestrial realm. See Scholem, Kabbalah, pp. 118-19. Since the sefirot constitute the basic elements or realities of divine life, and all lower realms are patterned after them, the presence of the Shekhinah in all levels is assured.
169. This is the zaddik. "The World was created only to attend to such a one," the perfect human being (Berakhot 6b). The Shekhinah rests upon him (Zohar 3:220a), and remains with him wherever he goes (Zohar 1:189a); he can cleanse Israel if they attach themselves to him (See above, portion Zav, pp. 133-34, 166).
170. The idea that every word of the Torah has 70 aspects is found in Be-Midbar Rabbah 13:15. See the final paragraph of Abraham ibn Ezra's Introduction to his commentary on the Torah; Scholem, Symbolism, pp. 62-65.
171. Maimonides' comment is based on the similarity between zafra, "morning," and zippor, "bird."

172. In the Ba'al Shem's interpretation, David praises himself because he is able to seek only unification even as he walks through the marketplace; one will be able to serve God even in materiality due to the radical immanence of the Shekhinah.
173. The zaddik brings the Shekhinah to the Torah as he connects those with whom the Shekhinah is exiled to the life of Torah. This also results in the reunion of the Shekhinah with Tif'eret, the Torah.
174. Degel, pp. 253-54.
175. That is, one would concentrate on "a need on high," a divine need.
176. The greater desire is to be in "constant conversation" with God: the desire for devekut, for one on this level, outweighs all other considerations.
177. Berakhot 26b, referring to this verse from Psalms, equates siḥah, "plea" or "conversation," with prayer. Samuel the Younger is credited in Sanhedrin 11a with joining without permission a group involved in determining the length of the months; he did so, he said, in order to learn.
178. Degel, pp. 257-58.
179. Cf. Proverbs 16:15; below, pp. 306-7.
180. Quoting or referring to a number of biblical passages: Isaiah 18:3; 2 Kings 5:7; Psalm 149:8; Psalm 68:7.
181. Cf. Esther 6:8-10, 8:4, 15.
182. Cf. Deuteronomy 8:2: "Remember the long way that YHVH your God has made you travel in the wilderness . . . to test you by hardships to learn what was in your hearts."
183. See portion Be-Reshit, p. 73 and note 2.
184. Teshuvah, return to God, is the means by which God's seeming concealment and the illusory walls that divide one from Him are broken; the price of a whole relationship with the deity is a broken heart.
185. Cf. Proverbs 16:15, Psalm 36:10.

186. The completion of the verse is marked off by parentheses in all the editions, suggesting that the word (teru'ah) was added in the original editing. On teru'ah as shattering, see above, pp. 293-95.
187. A related midrash, not referring to the verse in Proverbs, is found in Megillah 16a.
188. Degel, p. 266.
189. See above, portion Be-Reshit, p. 73, note 3.
190. These four levels of meaning in the Torah are indicated in the text with the abbreviation pardes, which became the standard term by which to speak of Torah's multiple dimensions following the author of Ra'aya Meheimna and Tikkunei Zohar (see Zohar 1:26b; Scholem, Symbolism, pp. 53-61). Each consonant of pardes denotes a level of meaning: peshat, the literal meaning; remez, the allegorical meaning; derashah, the midrashic interpretation; and sod, the secret or mystical meaning. Note that for Ephraim these are the "spiritual dimensions" of the Torah, distinct from, and higher than, the Torah's basic life (nefesh). Elsewhere, Ephraim calls the level of secret meaning the "true peshat": "At first one must study and understand the simple meaning. Then he will expand into numerous lights and secrets of Torah. And then from the strength of interpretation he will return and arrive at the true peshat" (Degel, p. 279); see above, Va-'Ethannan, pp. 216-17. Regarding the five aspects of the soul see above, Yitro, note 56.
191. The nefesh is the lowest rung in this kabbalistic anthropology, being merely that which gives life; it has less force and "movement" than the higher levels, which are therefore able to impart their greater vitality and "restore" the soul. Central to this formulation is the idea that the higher levels of meaning of the Torah can grant vitality not only to lower levels of Torah but also to the parallel lower states of one's soul.
192. Degel, pp. 274-75.
193. Again we see the hierarchy of those closer to God, and those on a lower level. Elsewhere Ephraim again describes the latter as those in God's image and the former as those who are actually "of" God (see above, Yitro, pp. 87-89).

194. "Earth" is a designation for Malkhut, who is also the daughter of Binah, the supernal mother. Oft repeated in the Ra'aya Meheimna (Zohar 3:256b, 258a) and the Tikkunei Zohar (tikkun 21 (61b)) is the saying that God "established the daughter through the father." The father is Hokhmah, Wisdom. Wisdom is the nourishing source of all creation and the essence of revelation.
195. Hokhmah is identified as the east (kadim) in descriptions of the unification of the various divine aspects; see Zohar 3:120a; Tikkunei Zohar 13 (87b). Wisdom also comes before (kedam) the other sefirot; it includes the two other divine intelligences, Binah and Da'at (Zohar 3:144a) together with which it sustains the world (Zohar 2:221a). Turning toward wisdom is here seen as the essential religious orientation.
196. This is the zaddik; see above, Be-Reshit, p. 83 and note 26.
197. Degel, pp. 280-1.
198. See Matt, Zohar, pp. 113-16, 245-47.
199. This is a paraphrase of a statement of Moses Hayyim Luzzatto, an eighteenth-century Kabbalist (cited by Matt, Zohar, p. 193 note 3).
200. The interpretation here is based on the shared root consonants of "your ointments" (shemanekha) in Song of Songs 1:3, and "all robust men" (kol-shamen) in Judges 3:29. Ephraim interprets Rashi's explanation as a reference to the wise, and transfers his reinterpretation to the verse at hand.
201. Just as oil from one vessel can fill many vessels in various locations, so the good name (shem tov) of the zaddik is spread from place to place. The interesting point from a sociological viewpoint is the identification of this figure as an itinerant, and the positive value accorded his wandering.
202. See note 170 above.
203. 'Ahavah and 'ehad both have a numerical value of 13.
204. Degel, pp. 282-84. The first teaching in this collection has been translated by Jacobs, Hasidic Thought, pp. 48-50.

205. Parts of two prayers in the liturgy.
206. David turns the events of life into the letters of the psalms; I have not located a source for this. For the Ba'al Shem the idea was perhaps related to the technique of contemplation through attachment to the letters of prayer themselves.
207. Here the usual imagery of that which is more valuable being clothed in garments which must be removed is inverted: the world's taint enters the soul through the body even though the soul protects the person.
208. "He" in the Hebrew, which I have emended.
209. The ritual being described is the circling of the sanctuary with the Torah scrolls at Simhat Torah, the annual celebration marking completion of the yearly cycle of its reading.

Notes: Dreams

1. Degel Mahane Ephraim, pp. 284-85. The Jerusalem edition omits one letter in the abbreviation honoring Ephraim's memory.
2. The word tikdash, used here for "forfeited," is from the root meaning "set aside" or "make holy." Perhaps the zaddik's teaching is the sown seed by which he is united with Torah.
3. Three of the four species of ritual significance in celebrating Sukkot.
4. Removing the shell to eat the nutmeat symbolizes breaking the power of the "shells" to release the divine spark within. As is frequent in this dream material, Yiddish terms are used to refer to the type of nut and its meat.
5. Guests from a number of the Hasidic communities are here brought together around the central figure of Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk (1730-1788), who settled in Israel at the head of a group of Hasidim in 1777.
6. Cf. 2 Samuel 6:14, describing David's dancing.
7. This dream ends with et cetera, indicating either an editorial decision by Ephraim's son or the kind of abbreviation common to diaries.
8. The chair of Elijah is a special chair usually left vacant at a circumcision, symbolically meant for Elijah, identified with the "angel of the Covenant" (Malachi 3:1). Here the Ba'al Shem occupies Elijah's seat!
9. The sukkah is the temporary "booth" constructed as part of the observance of the Sukkot festival. A prominent part of welcoming the Sabbath is the singing of Lekhah Dodi, a kabbalistic hymn to the Shekhinah written by Solomon Alkabez in the sixteenth century.
10. See note 12 below.
11. These are the names of the different blasts blown on the shofar, the ram's horn blown on Rosh ha-Shanah and Yom

- Kippur. The bimah is the reader's platform where the shofar is blown and the Torah regularly read.
12. The "holy beard" refers to the beard of Arieh Anpin, the sefirah Keter (see Zohar 3:130b-131a; 289b); the Supernal Mother is Binah. Ephraim interprets the dream as promising both freedom from the forces of the demonic and immersion in the knowledge of Kabbalah.
 13. The kittel is a white garment worn by many observant Jews during the High Holidays, and traditionally used as one's burial shroud.
 14. Shemini Azeret is an eighth day added to the festival of Sukkot, and the day prior to Simhat Torah, the "Re-joicing in the Torah."